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INSIDE



Gay 'marriage' debate takes center stage after President Obama openly states his support. The discussion is likely not over. Read related stories inside.

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◆ 1st president to support gay 'marriage'

◆ N.C. becomes 30th state with marriage amend.

◆ A history of marriage votes in U.S.

◆ Survey asks if homosexual behavior is sin

◆ Black Baptist leader rebukes Obama

Gentlemen, *START YOUR ENGINES!*

By Brian Harris
Special to The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Brian Harris

Avid race fans flood Talladega Superspeedway on May 4-6.

Alabama Baptists minister to race fans in Talladega

Twice a year a pilgrimage begins for many throughout the Southeast. People pack up their belongings and relocate to Talladega Superspeedway in east central Alabama. Approximately 108,500 fans of drivers like Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Gordon and Carl Edwards live in tents, recreational vehicles or commute in over the three-day event making the area the fifth largest in the state. They proudly wear attire that proclaims their allegiance to their driver of choice and yell loudly their disdain or approval for the other drivers. To say they are passionate, is an understatement. As fans drive into Talladega they can't help but see Frank Nelson and a large group of volunteers from North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown, manning the tents set up along the entrance to the speedway. They

hand out free coffee, water and a race schedule with information printed on the back about what it means to be a Christian.

Dawn Welliver, a race fan from Orlando, Fla., stopped by the area asking for information about the next day's race and landed in a 10-minute conversation sharing about herself, her life and her walk with Christ.

Welliver thanked the volunteers for their work as she headed on to her destination.

It was quite possible Welliver happened upon more volunteers from Alabama Baptist churches because several were present around the speedway grounds as part of Alabama Raceway Ministries (ARM) — just like North Highlands Baptist.

ARM was formed in 1982 by Frank and Betty Stark, raceway ministries pioneers from Missouri, in order to reach out to fans that gather at Talladega.

The ministry has grown to eight ministry locations around the speedway grounds. All sites are sponsored by Alabama Baptist

(See 'Churches,' page 16)



Photo by Brian Harris

Alabama Raceway Ministries promotes its Sunday worship service for fans at Talladega Superspeedway.

"People come in, maybe with a beer in their hand, or whatever. But we don't care. We want to share the gospel and meet people where they are at, just love on them."

COMMENT

All the Wrong Answers

Political leaders in Washington faced important issues last week. Unfortunately, it seems they settled for all the wrong answers.

Most visible was the announcement by President Barack Obama that he unequivocally supports the concept of gay “marriage” (see story, page 12). The ironies of the announcement could not be missed. First, the announcement came on the heels of two significant setbacks for advocates of homosexual behaviors. On May 8, the day before the president declared his support for gay “marriage” during an ABC News interview aired on national television, the citizens of North Carolina overwhelmingly approved an amendment to their state constitution declaring that marriage in that state would be defined as a union between one man and one woman.

The election outcome was expected. What was not expected was the margin of victory. The constitutional amendment received 61 percent of the vote even though pollsters had predicted a vote in the mid-50s.

Only four days earlier, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, which meets every four years, ended without even voting on whether or not to ordain gay clergy or allow pastors to bless same-sex unions. That was a bitter defeat for homosexual advocates who called the outcome “very surprising.”

But the gloom of defeat was banished when President Obama officially declared his support for a position he publicly opposed during his campaign for the presidency in 2008.

Pundits have tried to explain the timing of the announcement by blaming Vice President Joe Biden who earlier that week said he was comfortable with the concept of gay “marriage.” These observers say Biden’s comment forced the president into declaring a position.

That argument is hard to understand. When Republican Vice President Dick Cheney announced his support for gay “marriage,” as decided on a state-by-state basis, that announcement did not prompt then-President George W. Bush to say anything about the issue.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that President Obama had an eye toward the political landscape as he decided when to make this announcement.

Another irony is the president’s attempt to justify



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

tify his support for his position by quoting the Golden Rule. He said, “... the thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing Himself on our behalf, but it’s also the Golden Rule, you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated.”

When Jesus shared the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12, He was referencing the Old Testament teaching of Leviticus 19:18, where God declared, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Only one chapter earlier, Leviticus 18:22, the Bible calls homosexual behavior “detestable.”

Golden Rule doesn’t apply

The Golden Rule is not a “live and let live” way of life. All people must be treated with dignity and respect. None of that, however, negates the standards of righteousness outlined in God’s Word. None of that provides excuses for behaviors clearly outside of biblical acceptance.

President Obama’s position on gay “marriage” is wrong. It is bad social policy and it is inconsistent with clear biblical teaching. The president cannot justify his position by trying to hide behind the Golden Rule.

Two days later, May 10, the U.S. House of Representatives faced a different moral issue — the national budget. The combination of the second worst economic catastrophe in the nation’s history (the deep and continuing recession) and an assortment of national policies have produced a crippling national debt and unsustainable spending patterns by the federal government.

It was the old “bullets or butter” debate. During Vietnam, the nation argued about whether Americans could afford bullets for the war and butter for people to eat at the same time. When choices

had to be made, those backing the war argued for “bullets”; those opposed supported “butter.”

The Budget Control Act passed in 2011 required equal cuts from social programs and national defense totaling about \$109 billion if Congress could not come up with a budget by Jan. 2, 2013. The May 10 House vote was an effort to prevent equal cuts. Unfortunately, the approved budget came down on the side of bullets.

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said after the vote, “We have protected our military.” He was right. All of the proposed cuts came from the “butter” side of the budget, none from the military.

For example, the Congressional Budget Office estimated the budget approved by the House would mean 22 million households with children would lose aid to buy food, 300,000 children would be cut from school lunch programs and 300,000 children would lose health insurance.

The Congressional Budget Office also reported that demand for food assistance will continue to grow through 2014. We already know that in Alabama and elsewhere, hunger is a growing problem among the elderly.

America’s military needs to be protected. So do the most vulnerable of our citizens.

Resolving the nation’s debt crisis is a necessity but no element of our nation’s citizens should be sacrificed in the process. Preserving the nation’s safety net is a moral obligation rooted in the Golden Rule. It does not validate freeloading by anyone but neither does it permit society to respond callously to the needs of others.

Like with the president’s announcement, there is irony in the House vote. It seems to be more of a political statement than an actual budget. Insiders say the House is staking out strong positions to improve its negotiating position with the Senate. And both have an eye on the November elections.

Evidently President Obama believes most voters will be concerned about jobs in the upcoming election and that makes this a good time to make a dramatic change in the social fabric of the nation.

The House budget seems to conclude that most voters will be concerned about their own financial situation and not concerned about the welfare of neighbors who may be hurting.

Both are sad commentaries on leadership. To distract with one hand while doing something else with the other is dishonest. To promote personal selfishness at the expense of others is close to original sin. When leaders stoop to such tactics, it is no wonder they come up with all the wrong answers.

As a Christian, I long for those who dare to lead this nation to be committed to the moral values of the Bible and to be willing to embrace those values personally as well as in public policy, even in a national budget.

Letters to the Editor

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

I want to take an opportunity to pen a word of special thanks to *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper for two reasons: First, for the second-mile effort to produce a commemorative edition highlighting the 2011 storms and response efforts. Though Alabama will

always be sensitive to the struggles we faced together following one of our nation’s largest disaster events, the special edition has also reminded us of the widespread ministry that took place in the days following as Christ worked through His churches to become a hub for help and hope in communities across our state. *The Alabama Baptist* worked

to effectively provide a clear perspective on both the events that took place and the lives that were changed. The ongoing coverage continues to reveal the extent of our Baptist family’s involvement in Great Commission Ministries.

Second, I cannot overlook the dedication and attention to detail for a year of (See ‘Letters,’ page 4)



"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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'Injudicious comments'

Land apologizes after meeting with black Baptist leaders

A five-part apology for "injudicious comments" was released May 9 by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), regarding the Trayvon Martin killing.

Land's apology stemmed from a May 2 meeting in which several key African-American leaders were in attendance, including Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans; James Dixon Jr., president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and senior pastor of El-Bethel Baptist Church, Fort Washington, Md.; and K. Marshall Williams, chairman of the Southern Baptist African American Advisory Council and pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

"I am here today to offer my genuine and heartfelt apology for the harm my words of March 31, 2012, have caused to specific individuals, the cause of racial reconciliation, and the gospel of Jesus Christ," Land said in his two-page apology May 9.

As a result of the meeting May 2 that lasted nearly five hours, Land said, "I have come to understand in sharper relief how damaging my words were."

Among others at the May 2 meeting were Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, and Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. In all, 12 individuals attended the session at the SBC Building in Nashville.

Dixon, contacted by Baptist Press, said he would have no comment on Land's apology until after ERLC trustees have completed the process initiated by their executive committee April 18 regarding comments by Land on his weekly call-in radio show over the intrusion of politics into the Martin case, in which Land referenced President Obama, Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson by name. The six-member executive committee, in a public statement, expressed sadness "that this controversy has erupted" and concern "about how these events may damage the work of the ERLC in support of Southern Baptists and in furtherance of the Kingdom of our Lord."

The ERLC executive committee also created an ad hoc committee to investigate allegations of plagiarism over material Land failed to attribute to a *Washington Times* columnist on the March 31 broadcast.

Steve Faith, ERLC trustee chairman, issued a statement later on May 9 that the ad

Land's statement of apology for Trayvon Martin comments

In part —

I am here today to offer my genuine and heartfelt apology for the harm my words of March 31, 2012, have caused to specific individuals, the cause of racial reconciliation, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the ministry of The Reverend James Dixon Jr., the president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a group of brethren who met with me earlier this month, I have come to understand in sharper relief how damaging my words were.

"I admit that my comments were expressed in anger at what I thought was one injustice — the tragic death of Trayvon Martin — being followed by another injustice — the media trial of George Zimmerman, without appeal to due judicial process and vigilante justice promulgated by the New Black Panthers. Like my brothers in the Lord, I want true justice to prevail and must await the revelation of the facts of the case in a court of law. Nevertheless, I was guilty of making injudicious comments.

"First, I want to confess my insensitivity to the Trayvon Martin family for my imbalanced characterization of their son which was based on news reports, not personal knowledge. My heart truly goes out to a family whose lives have been turned upside down by the shocking death of a beloved child. I can only imagine their sense of loss and deeply regret any way in which my language may have contributed to their pain.

"Second, I am here to confess that I impugned the motives of President Obama



LAND

and the reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. It was unchristian and unwise for me to have done so. God alone is the searcher of men's hearts. I cannot know what motivated them in their comments in this case. I have sent personal letters of apology to each of them asking for them to forgive me. I continue to pray for them regularly, and for our president daily.

"Third, I do not believe that crime statistics should in any way justify viewing a person of another race as a threat. I own my earlier words about statistics; and I regret that they may suggest that racial profiling is justifiable. I have been an outspoken opponent of profiling and was grief-stricken to learn that comments I had made were taken as a defense of what I believe is both unchristian and unconstitutional. I share the dream

of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that all men, women, boys and girls would be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. Racial profiling is a heinous injustice. I should have been more careful in my choice of words.

"Fourth, I must clarify another poor choice of words. I most assuredly do not believe American racism is a 'myth' in the sense that it is imaginary or fictitious. It is all too real and all too insidious. My reference to myth in this case was to a story used to push a political agenda. Because I believe racism is such a grievous sin, I stand firmly against its politicization. Racial justice is a nonpartisan ideal and should be embraced by both sides of the political aisle." (BP)

hoc committee is working "with due diligence and will bring a thorough and complete report to the ERLC executive committee who will prayerfully consider the findings. The ERLC executive committee will bring a report to the full board of trustees and then release a public statement by June 1.

"It is important to understand that our

Southern Baptist polity places Dr. Land under the authority of the ERLC trustees who are elected by and accountable directly to the convention," said Faith, a retired pastor and Baptist association director of missions in Indiana. "The trustees are aware of their responsibility to the convention and to the watching world." (BP)

Vanderbilt BCM no longer complying with new policy

The Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) at Vanderbilt University has reversed course and now says it will not comply with the school's new nondiscrimination policy.

The *Baptist and Reflector* reported May 7 that while the university has approved the Baptist ministry as a recognized student organization on campus, that BCM will decline that status.

The Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) owns the Baptist Collegiate Ministries building, which is located in the center of campus.

Earlier Vanderbilt BCM director Thom Thornton said he was assured that a new

policy requiring that membership in any campus organization be open to all students would still allow the group to select leaders who are committed to the organization's mission.

However, Randy Davis, executive director of the TBC, wrote members of the convention's executive board to say that signing on to the policy would require the BCM "if the occasion should ever arise, to open the leadership to those who were not Christian."

"Perhaps we should have known this earlier, but we did not," Davis wrote, adding that both Thornton and TBC Collegiate Ministries coordinator Bill Choate are supportive of the decision.

According to *The Tennessean*, 27 religious groups have said they will comply with the nondiscrimination policy next year, while 14 have refused. (ABP)

VOICE YOUR OPINION

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

Remember to:

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

Bellamy receives Judson College's 2012 Outstanding Alumna Award

Zora Richards Bellamy of Altoona, Pa., received the 2012 Outstanding Alumna Award at Judson College's recent alumnae weekend, J Day, April 13-14.

Her friends and co-workers said Bellamy's life has been predicated on giving back to the community, providing leadership and creating opportunities for girls and women.

Bellamy, originally of Marion, was baptized at Siloam Baptist Church, Marion. She graduated cum laude from Judson in 1955 with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. She later took classes at the University of Alabama to earn her teaching degree and taught math and science for two years at Monroe County High School, Monroeville.

She married William C. Bellamy in 1957 and moved to Washington,



BELLAMY

where she taught at the Congressional Schools of Northern Virginia.

She became the first woman appointed to the Blair County Planning Commission in Pennsylvania.

She also served 10 years on the Altoona Planning Commission.

Bellamy became executive director of the YWCA of Altoona in 1983. She established an annual Woman of the Year award for outstanding women in business and industry and annual Triangle Awards to recognize YWCA members who were active in their church and community.

Bellamy became the executive director of the Blair County Association for the Blind and Visually Handicapped in 1988. While executive director she served on the boards of two statewide organizations — the Pennsylvania Associa-

tion for the Blind and the Pennsylvania Industries for the Blind and Handicapped. She retired in 1996.

"The Alumnae Association has chosen well," said Judson President David Potts. "The College's alma mater speaks of a 'beacon on a hill-top.' Certainly, Zora Bellamy has reflected light in every facet of her life."

Charlotte Clements, Judson's vice president for admissions and financial aid, was honored as the recipient of the Alumnae Association's Past Presidents Award for Staff Excellence.

Recipients of the award are evaluated on several elements including service to Judson, accomplishments and involvement in the campus community.

"Charlotte's love for Judson both as an alumna and a staff member is unmistakable, and her desire for Judson's prosperity inspires those who work with her," said Jackie Davis Shivers, of Huntsville. (JC)

Letters

(continued from page 2)
continued coverage in the issues leading up to and beyond the special edition that exposed the challenges faced by associational missionaries and churches involved in rebuild and recovery efforts. The rally cry provided by *The Alabama Baptist* staff assisted with accurate information that fostered the development of new partnerships and missions projects for churches offering support through in-kind donations, construction teams, VBS and many other missions opportunities as potential needs and progress were communicated.

Though my appreciation may not be as significant as the plaudits and accolades offered from other publishing peers in the news media, I feel confident, based on comments I have received from volunteers across the state, that many feel the same as I regarding the useful and timely information provided by *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper.

Thank you for your partnership

and efforts to tell the story of who Christ is in Alabama Baptist life. It is my privilege to serve alongside as we labor together in service of our Savior.

Mel R. Johnson
State missionary
Office of global missions
Disaster relief and construction

NO NEED FOR APOLOGY

Mr. Land doesn't need to apologize for anything. Everything he said is true, and many know it.

I've heard it and seen it in many other sources. I didn't read *The New York Times*.

McKissic owes him an apology, for what Mr. Land said is absolutely true.

Emory D. Carlisle
Phenix City, Ala.

'HOME BREW' BILL

I'm extremely disappointed at the "Home Brew" bill (in the state Legislature). I'm 91 years of age and have seen the effects of any kind of

strong drink. I've seen homes broken, hearts broken, lives taken from the use.

Why do we not put as much emphasis on ridding our world of strong drink as we do cigarettes?

I think strong drink causes more health issues than smoke.

Nina W. Barron
Clanton, Ala.

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving
Year to Date through April 30, 2012

APRIL	
CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,641,666
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$2,698,755
Under Goal for Month	\$942,911

YEAR TO DATE	
CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$14,566,664
CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$13,923,588
Under Goal for Year	\$643,076

Across Alabama's Associations



AUTAUGA

► **Bethel Church, Jones**, will celebrate homecoming June 3. Joy Masters will sing at 9:45 a.m. and the worship service will be at 11:30 a.m. Former Pastor Rod Rochester will speak. A covered-dish lunch will follow.

BIBB

► **Ashby Church, Brierfield**, will celebrate homecoming May 20, 10:30 a.m. with The Men of Music. A covered-dish lunch and singing will follow. Stan Hughley is interim pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► Pastors of **East Gardendale Church** presented a quilt during the church's "A Time to Remember" service held at First Church, Fultondale. First, Fultondale sustained major damage from an April 27, 2011, tornado, and the quilt was given as a remembrance of the Lord's provision since last year. Allen Davis is pastor. ► **Hillview Church, Birmingham**, will host the Melody Boys Quartet in concert May 20, 10:30 a.m. For information call 205-798-0340. Mark Barber is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **West Highland Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate homecoming June 3, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Larry Stewart is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Cedar Grove Church, Leeds**, will host Terry Padgett as Elvis for a concert to benefit the church's Kidz Camp. The Kidz Choir is the opening act and there will be a silent auction. For information call 205-699-8446. Seating is limited. Billy Abrams is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Sam Day** is the new director of missions for **Tuscaloosa Association** effective June 11.



DAY

He served as pastor of First Church, Southside. He holds a bachelor of arts from the University of Montevallo and a master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Day is co-founder of L.E.A.D. Solutions, a leadership training ministry. He and his wife, Kim, have two children.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Central Church, Opelika**, will host Christian comedian and musician Brother Billy Bob Bohannon May 20, 6:30 p.m.



By Christine Kapurch
Correspondent, TAB

Someone You Should Know

BILLY GREGG

*Ebenezer Baptist Church, Stanton
Chilton Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: Psalm 23:1
FAVORITE HYMN: "Love Lifted Me"
HOBBIES: Hunting, playing with the grandchildren

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Earline for 61 years; two grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren



GREGG

Billy Gregg has served as the deacon for Ebenezer Baptist Church for more than 50 years. He served as chairman of the maintenance committee and is an active member of the church's men's ministry (previously called brotherhood).

Q: What led you to become a Christian?

A: [I] was brought up in a Christian home and taught early in age that was important in life.

Q: What led you to serve in the ministry?

A: It was a call ... and I felt

like I could serve and be glad to serve.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: We meet on a regular basis and we all have a certain membership of the church. We minister to those in a time of need or rejoicing.

Q: How do family members support you?

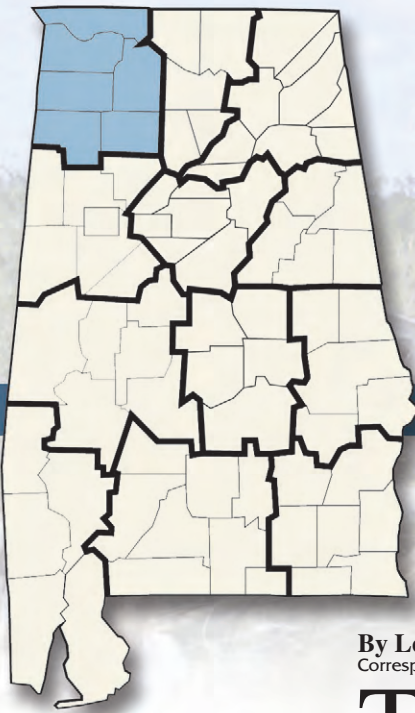
A: My mother was very supportive. She was a member (of Ebenezer Baptist) for many years. Having traveled that family member route, it was something that I wanted to do.

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

A: Probably sooner or later, we have a group of younger deacons and I will probably step down and let them lead. I will always be a member of this church.

Q: What difference will this ministry make for you in the future?

A: I feel like each member of the church is interested in each other. I have done a lot for the church and as I get older I hope they do as I have done.



Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April 2011 tornadoes

Alabama Baptists committed to District 10 area

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The storm activity of April 27, 2011, and its destruction most certainly etched a place in history.

In fact, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) report "The Historic Tornadoes of April 2011" noted that it was "one of the deadliest in the country since systematic tornado record keeping began in 1950."

The report states that 316 people died that day in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia and Virginia.

Two-thirds of those fatalities were in Alabama.

All but three of the deaths occurred in the afternoon and evening rash of cyclones, states the report, which was released last December.

More than 2,400 people were injured and the storm damage has been estimated at more than \$4.2 billion, according to the report.

That day, there were 199 tornadoes across 14 states, the report continues.

News accounts and other sources have placed the number of tornadoes in Alabama at 61.

"Five were responsible for 208 fatalities" in Marion, Franklin, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Tuscaloosa, Jefferson, DeKalb, St. Clair and Calhoun counties, the NOAA report reveals.

In the District 10 region of Alabama Baptist life — which includes Colbert, Franklin, Lawrence, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston counties — 70 people lost their lives.

Two factors that may have contributed to the high number of fatalities in Alabama were "a large number of rare, long-track violent storms" and "tornado tracks intersecting densely populated areas," the report concludes.

When the one-year anniversary arrived, some areas of Alabama had been able to achieve a new "normal," while many others remained in a state of recovery. Those who live in ravaged areas realize it may take years to regain a level of normalcy.

Yet as time marches away from

District 10

Colbert-Lauderdale
Association

Muscle Shoals Association

Winston Association

Marion Association

Franklin Association

Explanation of districts

Alabama's 75 associations are grouped into 12 geographical districts. The districts allow the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions to work with and offer resources in a more localized way. Each district has various state missionaries assigned to it. When there are meetings or workshops that need to take place with all associational leaders, the district setup allows for a more practical model for those events. The April 27 tornadoes and resulting damage is a prime example of how having the 12 districts allowed for immediate strategizing and organization on the state and associational level. *The Alabama Baptist* has been highlighting storm recovery and relief assistance in each of the 12 districts over the past year and will continue until all districts are covered.



Photo courtesy of Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association

LENDING A HELPING HAND — Disaster relief volunteers from Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association help at a feeding unit after the April 27, 2011, tornadoes.

the tragedy, the less likely it is that the needs in those places will come to mind.

So it is with urgency that Larry Dover, director of missions (DOM) for Franklin Baptist Association, said there is "still a need

not to forget us."

Colbert-Lauderdale Association

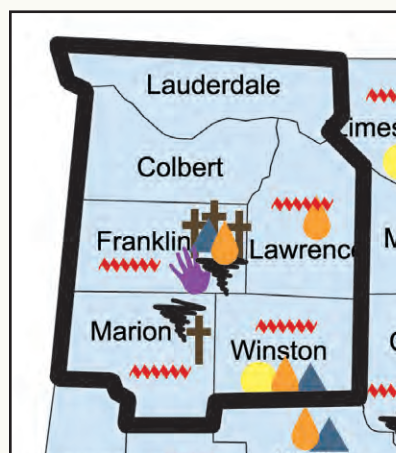
On April 27, 2011, the disaster

relief crew of Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association cut trees until late afternoon, when the weather became quite threatening, said DOM Eddy Garner.

(See 'Churches,' page 6)

Highlights from District 10

State disaster relief efforts in the area (shown by county)



- 4 of the 5 associations (6 counties) have Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts focused on them.
- 2 on-site command centers were set up immediately following the tornado damage.
- 1 state feeding unit was set up to help the numerous local units.
- 3 shower unit locations were brought in during the first few weeks.
- 1 child care team assisted in the area.
- 4 mobile chapels were set up.
- 2 Alabama Baptist churches in the area were severely damaged.

Churches, associations assist one another,

(continued from page 5)

Later some disaster relief volunteers went to Phil Campbell to cut trees and assist families with locating missing members, Garner said.

Garner, who was one of those helping family members find the missing, described it as "traumatic." He said chaplains were counseling people.

For a couple of weeks, Colbert-Lauderdale Association's chain saw and chaplaincy volunteers served in Phil Campbell, said Garner, who as DOM sought to assist his counterparts in Marion, Franklin and Muscle Shoals.

Garner was able to coordinate a team from Mississippi that arrived to help in Franklin and Marion.

The team lodged at First Baptist Church, Russellville, in Franklin Association. So did an Oklahoma group that worked in Franklin and Muscle Shoals through Colbert-Lauderdale Association.

Colbert-Lauderdale Association churches donated food, money and other items for those affected by the storms. Churches gave food and money to feed people in Phil Campbell, and a feeding unit from South Alabama assisted in the endeavor.

The Saturday after the tornado, an "unbelievable" number of people arrived in Franklin, Marion and Muscle Shoals associations to volunteer, Garner said.

For two or three months, people from Colbert-Lauderdale Association traveled into affected areas.

In August 2011, teams from the association and churches worked through First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, on various projects.

In all, as many as 20 teams from the association and its churches have traveled to damaged areas to work, Garner noted.

The association will participate in rebuilding Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, in Franklin Association this summer and possibly Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, in Marion Association, Garner said.

In October 2011, churches of the association, other denominations and businesses held a ministers' appreciation banquet for pastors from Franklin, Marion, Muscle Shoals and Limestone associations.

The ministry couples were treated to a getaway at Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa. Garner estimated that 100 pastors attended.

How to assist in relief efforts

For help in finding associations with storm-related projects, call Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 389.

To see a list of needs across the state, visit www.sbd.org.

To find other ways of getting involved, call:

► Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association, 256-383-7021;

► Franklin Baptist Association, 256-332-1874;

► Marion Baptist Association, 205-921-7572;

► Muscle Shoals Baptist Association, 256-974-8878; or

► Winston Baptist Association, 205-489-5137. (TAB)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

TRAVELING TO AFFECTED AREAS — Baptists from across the state and nation will participate in helping rebuild Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, in Franklin Baptist Association. Pictured here is where the church once stood.

The reason for the getaway, Garner explained, was that the pastors in those areas were doing what they could to care for individuals affected by the storms. It seemed that these pastors could benefit from time away from the situation to help them recover too.

Even though a year has lapsed since the storms, some people still have physical or emotional needs that must be addressed. Garner said it is important not to forget or to overlook those needs.

Franklin Association

A tornado on April 27, 2011, tore through Marion County's Hackleburg, Franklin County's Phil Campbell and Oak Grove and continued into Lawrence County, said Larry Dover, DOM of Franklin Association.

Twenty-six people in Franklin County lost their lives, and one additional from the county who was in another location. Hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed. "Every building in the path was destroyed," Dover said. And peripheral damage was plentiful.

"This was total destruction," in some places as much as a mile-and-a-half wide, he said.

Mountain View Baptist and First, Phil Campbell, took direct hits.

Immediately a "tremendous outpouring of local folks" began to assist, Dover said, noting Colbert-Lauderdale Association's disaster relief team appeared quickly.

Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville, and First, Russellville, established food service for people in Hackleburg and Phil Campbell and provided lodging for volunteers coming into the area.

At least 80 percent of Franklin Association's trained disaster relief volunteers were on the job.

In addition to volunteers from Colbert-Lauderdale Association, individuals from Morgan Baptist Association, other locations in Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma and more gave their assistance.

"We also had local folks," untrained volun-

teers, Dover said. "Those folks just showed up by the pickup loads."

They had the skills and equipment, so they went right to work, he said. "There were hundreds and hundreds of [them]. The damage was so extensive, you could just stop anywhere and work."

Dover said it took weeks to get some roads open.

When efforts turned to rebuilding, teams from Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee, as well as Mennonites from Ohio and Pennsylvania, answered the call. Among the Alabamians who responded were Alabama-Crenshaw Baptist Association, Lamar Baptist Association and County Line Baptist Church, Enterprise, in Coffee Baptist Association. A shower unit from Baldwin Baptist Association accommodated churches that were housing volunteers.

Franklin Association's team decided to stay home for its missions trip last year, Dover noted.

"That week, we did a building blitz," he said. The team started one house and completed eight or nine other projects.

Groups from Lamar Association and Kentucky assisted with projects, and Lamar Association will be coming back in May. Dover said teams might work this summer if funds are available for rebuilding.

So far, volunteers have worked on 33 homes. Some required minor repairs, some major. Four were totally rebuilt.

Those numbers do not include what the Mennonites and others did, Dover said.

The association still needs volunteer teams "for many more months."

The sight of empty lots or partial foundations is still abundant, he said. "There's still

a tremendous need. You can see that as you drive through."

Nonetheless, Dover said progress is visible in communities.

In addition, First, Phil Campbell, is back in its facility, while as many as 1,500 volunteers are committed to rebuilding Mountain View Baptist this summer.

A positive that grew from this tragedy is that people who previously thought no one cared about them discovered there "are many, many who do," Dover added. "It's been amazing the people who came up and said, 'What can I do?'" People offered their homes, campers and the like for individuals who had no place to live.

"I think the community is closer than they were," he said.

Individuals did not wait on others to help them; they helped themselves. And when help was offered, they would direct it to someone they felt needed it more, Dover said.

Marion Association

"We did not have a tornado. We had a disaster," said Mark W. Gallups, DOM of Marion Association.

A fierce cyclone barreled through Marion County, leaving 30 people dead and more than 200 homes destroyed.

The storm also claimed a school and four churches. One of the churches was Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, where the pastor and some relatives were sheltered in the basement.

"Hackleburg basically did not exist after that," Gallups said. First Baptist Church, Hackleburg, was left standing, but not without damage.

In some ways, Marion County was over-

*It was
"overwhelming" to
see just how many
were willing to serve.*

**DOM Robert Smith
Muscle Shoals
Baptist Association**

communities in rebuilding after 2011 storms

looked after the storms because the magnitude of damage there was not realized for a while, Gallups said.

Initially, individuals within the county were helping each other.

Gallups said Steve Lawrence, then-pastor of First, Hackleburg, “did a phenomenal job” of organizing assistance. David Cantrell, who was the church’s associate pastor at the time, coordinated emergency relief.

“They literally worked day and night,” Gallups said. “They were heroes.”

Gallups also praised officials with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions for being present. “Rick Lance was here. He was visible. Sammy Gilbreath was here.”

Major financial donations — totaling about \$68,000 — also came quickly from churches and associations around the state and nation as well as an “abundance of things” from Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, Georgia and elsewhere, Gallups said.

Disaster relief teams from Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and Pennsylvania worked in the area. Other entities giving assistance were the National Guard, Mennonites, Eight Days of Hope, Habitat for Humanity and Carpenters for Christ, he said.

First Baptist Church, Vernon, in Lamar Association also aided Marion Association, Gallups noted.

“We were able to help a lot of people,” he said, noting the monetary donations purchased furniture, appliances, pots and pans and funded related endeavors, such as moving a mobile home to a site.

“We did all kinds of things. We served hundreds of people on a weekly basis. I’m proud of our community.”

There were many acts of kindness and compassion during that time as well. One example Gallups gave was that Hines Memorial Baptist Church, Bear Creek, delayed its Vacation Bible School in order to accommodate Carpenters for Christ team members who came to the county to work.

Also, in August 2011, Danville Baptist Church, in Morgan Association worked with Marion Association on a “Day of Hope” block party. Gallups said all Marion Association churches were involved in this event that drew more than 800 people.

Gallups reported that work has begun on Emmanuel Baptist.

In March and April, the land was graded and the slab was poured. Teams from Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida, Georgia and Carpenters for Christ are slated to assist with construction.

Gallups said rebuilding Emmanuel will also become a project of the 22 churches of his association. He believes this common goal will pull everyone in the association together spiritually.

Gallups added that the association’s missions trip this year will be working at Emmanuel.

Marion Association has two great needs still to address. One is \$60,000 for rebuilding Emmanuel Baptist. The other

is a great deal of prayer.

“We need prayer support” as the people and the county continue to recover, Gallups said.

Muscle Shoals Association

“Right now, we’re doing pretty well,” reported Robert Smith, DOM of Muscle Shoals Baptist Association.

But on April 27, 2011, the opposite was true.

“It was bad,” Smith said.

The storms claimed as many as 14 lives in the county, caused “lots of injuries” and damaged or destroyed more than 200 homes, Smith said.

Chalybeate Springs Baptist Church, Hillsboro, also suffered harm.

Chaplains from the area went to the hospital that night to counsel and pray with people and to help unload ambulances.

“It was a terrible night. It started then and lasted for months,” Smith said of the efforts to comfort and assist those affected by the storms.

**“God just put
His hand on
us. Everywhere
around us was
devastated.”**

**DOM Al Hood
Winston Baptist
Association**



Photo by Joseph Chancellor

REMEMBERING THE DEVASTATION — The April 27, 2011, tornadoes ripped through areas like Hillsboro and Moulton in Lawrence County claiming as many as 14 lives.

Initial relief efforts within Lawrence County, where Muscle Shoals Association is located, were neighbor aiding neighbor.

Soon after the disaster, a chain saw group from Oklahoma served in the county for a week, Smith said. Plus, a feeding unit from Tennessee was provided, and Morgan Association brought a shower unit for the Oklahoma workers to use.

Moulton Baptist Church and Mount Hope Baptist Church, both in Muscle Shoals Association, and Colbert-Lauderdale Association housed volunteers responding to needs in the county.

Groups from Huntsville, Decatur, Oklahoma and Tennessee — even youth groups — gave their time, Smith said, noting assistance came from many different entities and denominations, such as the Mennonites.

The first three to five months after the storms were “really busy,” with a significant number of volunteers and groups serving, Smith said.

It was “overwhelming” to see just how many were willing to serve. Even some businesses paid their employees to engage in disaster relief during that time.

Then individuals and groups — such as First Baptist Church, Pelham, in Shelby Baptist Association — arrived to do repairs and other projects, Smith said.

The association received and dispensed about \$23,000 to people to help them get settled again, doing things like building porches and installing septic tanks.

Though much has been accomplished since last April, Lawrence County is “not back to normal, but well on its way,” Smith reported.

In this disaster, Smith said he saw the churches of Muscle Shoals Association reach out to people in the communities.

He said the people of Lawrence County came to understand that the churches are there to serve.

Smith said the situation also prompted more people from the association’s 34 churches to become trained in disaster relief.

Winston Association

“Compared to everybody else, we had minimal damage,” said Al Hood, DOM of Winston Baptist Association.

More than 40 structures in the northwestern portion of the county suffered damage or were destroyed, Hood said. Thankfully, though, “we had no injuries and no deaths.”

“God just put His hand on us,” he continued. “Everywhere around us was devastated.”

Being somewhat spared allowed the association and county to be a blessing to others by serving them, Hood said.

Because electrical and water service were available in the county, two feeding units from Florida set up at First Baptist Church, Double Springs, in Winston Association to serve people in Walker, Marion, Franklin, Cullman and Lawrence counties.

In addition, food service lines were established at First Baptist Church, Addison, and the association office. Volunteers delivered meals to some individuals in the county.

The people of the association “also did some food distribution here in Winston County” because there were individuals who lost everything in the storm and did not get paid on time as a result of the disaster, Hood said.

Nonetheless “we were a lot more fortunate than other associations,” he noted.

Winston Association’s disaster relief volunteers served not only in the county after the storms but also in Lawrence and Cullman counties.

Individuals from the association and its churches served as well in Phil Campbell and Hackleburg. The Sunday after the tornadoes, a couple of churches spent their afternoon working in storm-damaged areas.

Congregants from the association have assisted with four Habitat for Humanity houses in Hackleburg, as well as one project through First, Hackleburg, Hood said.

Winston Association’s laundry trailer has been to Higdon, Ensley and Cordova and “a lot of our people worked with it.”

For the most part, when assistance has been offered to Winston, Hood has directed it to other associations where the situation was much worse.

This disaster showed that basically all the churches of Winston are willing to reach out and meet needs, Hood said. It also demonstrated that people “are willing to do what it takes to get the job done.”



Photo courtesy of Emmanuel Baptist Church

PULLING TOGETHER — Rebuilding Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, in Marion Baptist Association is the association’s missions project for its 22 churches this year.

'Best-kept secret in town'

Alabama Campers on Mission helps with rebuilding projects in Franklin County

By Leigh Pritchett

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Have RV, will travel" may not be the official motto of Campers on Mission, but it does capture the spirit of what they do.

The approximately 600 members, including spouse teams, of the Alabama chapter of Campers on Mission (COM) are willing to pack their rigs and travel to missions projects, said Pete McKnight, president of the state chapter and a member of First Baptist Church, Eufaula, in Barbour Baptist Association.

McKnight said members provide free labor for construction and other projects and they do it for the Lord.

McKnight calls COM the "best-kept secret in town."

In the next few months, COM members will be involved in projects at Point Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla.; Raleigh's Place in Clanton; Oneida Baptist Institute in Kentucky and Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist Church in Russell County. Some members also work each year at a youth camp in Hawaii.

According to McKnight, recent COM projects have included work at Camp Baldwin; Blackwood Community Church, Headland; Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, Elba; and Alabama Raceway Ministries in Talladega. (see story, page 1)

Since the devastating tornadoes of April 27, 2011, however, rebuilding in Alabama has become a COM priority.

McKnight said some projects to which COM was previously committed were delayed to concentrate on needs in storm-damaged areas.

"Nobody (whose project was delayed) ever grumbled. No one complained," McKnight said.

One COM member worked much of the last year, helping to coordinate rebuilding projects in Franklin County.

That individual is Wilton Whigham, a member of Southside Baptist Church, Huntsville, in Madison Baptist Association.

Whigham has served as project coordinator in Franklin County almost constantly since June 2, 2011.

Whigham said he and his wife, Kathy, have spent most of that time in Phil Campbell but also helped with a project in Hackleburg.

Whigham coordinates the work of COM and other volunteers who are repairing and rebuilding homes.

"We're working on our third total rebuild" through Franklin Baptist Association, Whigham said.

Larry Dover, director of missions for Franklin Association, is appreciative of COM and its work in the county.

'Valuable resource'

"Those folks are a very valuable resource," Dover said.

Since last June, Whigham has been involved in approximately 30 projects. Sometimes, he provides physical labor; sometimes, he coordinates volunteer labor.

He also assesses needs, procures materi-



Photo courtesy of Wilton Whigham

SERVANT SPIRIT — Kathy Whigham (right) of Campers on Mission joins Barbara Ayers (second from right), Janice Dover (center) and others at FBC Phil Campbell to help serve meals after the April 27, 2011, tornadoes hit the area.

als and develops plans, among other things.

A mathematician by profession, Whigham was employed with the Army Missile Command in Huntsville. Upon retirement, he worked for a contractor, later operating his own home improvement business for eight years.

Finally, he joined COM to do the same for free and ended up quitting his business to devote all of his time to COM.

The Whighams were working at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega last April when tornadoes ravaged portions of Alabama.

The couple stayed at Shocco until their commitment was fulfilled.

Then they wanted to assist people affected by the storms. The Whighams went home and worked a few days in the Harvest area, serving in distribution and food preparation.

Soon Whigham received a call about becoming project coordinator in Franklin County.

Initially the Whighams served in Franklin County from June 2 through Dec. 18, 2011. They returned in March 2012 and are still there.

"I was only home from the 18th of December to the first of March," Whigham said. Even then, the Whighams really were not "home" that entire time. For about three weeks in January, they worked at Camp Baldwin.

Whigham said it is not unusual for him and



Photo courtesy of Wilton Whigham

COMMITTED TO REBUILDING — Wilton Whigham (right) and Robbie Robinson of Campers on Mission work on a rebuilding project with Franklin Baptist Association in Franklin County following the April 27, 2011, tornadoes.

his wife to be on a project for two months at a time, though three to four weeks is the general span.

"We've been blessed. We need to do what we can (to bless others)," Whigham said.

The current project on which Whigham is working is for someone who is unchurched. Whigham hopes this project will give the individual a receptive heart that wants to hear about Jesus.

Though a year has passed since the deadly tornadoes struck, much remains to be done in Franklin County and the number of volunteers has decreased.

"We could use help," Whigham said. "We're not getting as many volunteers (now)."

To get involved in Franklin County projects, call Franklin Association at 256-332-1874 or Whigham at 256-656-1666.

**"We've been
blessed. We need
to do what we can
(to bless others)."**

**Wilton Whigham
Campers on Mission
project coordinator**

Moulton's Mount Hope becomes beacon after storms

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On April 27, 2011, six people in the Mount Hope area of Lawrence County died. About 30 homes were lost and another 25 were damaged. Twenty-six poultry houses were destroyed, said Jerry Sibley, chairman of deacons at Mount Hope Baptist Church, Moulton, in Muscle Shoals Baptist Association.

"It was very devastating to us as a community," he said.

But "the community has pulled together. We had a great amount of help," with neighbor helping neighbor, and Muscle Shoals Association, the military, Emergency Management Agency and Red Cross gave assistance.

People with ties to the Mount Hope area — from Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois, Mississippi and Alabama — either sent money or came to offer assistance, Sibley noted, adding that some of the volunteers were directed to other areas of need because there were more than could be used.

Mount Hope Baptist opened its family life center to accept donations for those affected by the storms, and no one seeking assistance was turned away, Sibley said.

The church served meals to families and volunteers for about a month and kept the distribution center open about two months. Many of the volunteers, such as Sibley's wife, Reba, worked from the beginning to the end.

"We had so many helpers like that," Sibley said, noting the items left after everyone was served were donated to charity. "The people who we helped were very appreciative."

Generous donations

Also donated to Mount Hope Baptist to help in the community was about \$20,000, Sibley said. "Just last week, we gave the last money out."

The church tried to assist people on many different levels. As a matter of fact, Sibley chuckled as he said, "I knew every dog's name in the community."

In a disaster, "pets are so important," he explained. "[People] have something to hold on to."

For that reason, a small gesture, such as providing pet food, becomes a blessing to someone in crisis. So the church helped with that, Sibley said.

The whole experience "was a time of drawing together of [the community]," he noted.

Several weeks ago, about 200 people from a Tennessee church engaged in a sizable project in the Mount Hope area. They repaired homes, trimmed shrubs, built porches, burned debris and did other tasks that had been delayed so that higher priority jobs could be completed. Mount Hope Baptist housed the group.

Sibley said it has been a blessing to be able to help people who were hurting so badly.

"I hope we don't have to go through it again," he said. "But God is present, even in those situations."

Colbert-Lauderdale Association volunteers help with chain saw tasks, feeding unit

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Last year was a busy one for disaster relief volunteers in Alabama.

Butch Hillis — a member of Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence, in Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association and disaster relief coordinator for the District 10 region of Alabama Baptist associations — was one of those who devoted much time to assisting in crises.

On April 27, 2011, he and others from Colbert-Lauderdale Association's disaster relief chain saw crew were working in Florence and Sheffield after storms had passed that way.

Hillis said the group was asked to respond to Hackleburg and had planned to head there after completing the tasks on which it was working.

But that afternoon, "everybody was tired and soaking wet from working in the rain," Hillis said.

The crew decided to get some rest before going to Hackleburg, Hillis recounted.

Had the members instead left for Hackleburg at that time, they would have been there when a deadly tornado struck, Hillis said.

"The Lord had His hand on us," he observed.

The next day, the crew was directed to Phil Campbell, where members cut trees for a week until groups from Oklahoma, Mississippi and Florida arrived.

The out-of-state volunteers stayed at First Baptist Church, Russellville, and were served by a shower unit from Mobile.

In addition to assisting with chain saw tasks, Hillis helped to recruit volunteers to man a feeding unit at First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell. Hillis said the volunteers worked until July 29, 2011.

In late May 2011, another storm system created more work for Colbert-Lauderdale Association's chain saw crew. Hillis said the group worked into August to complete the tasks created by that storm.

Although disaster relief training was planned at Hillis' church in May 2011, the



Photo courtesy of Preston Hillis

ASSISTING IN TIMES OF CRISES — Lee Hill, associational coordinator for Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association, helps with debris removal in Phil Campbell after the devastating April 27, 2011, tornadoes tore through the area.

session was postponed until September because those who were to conduct it were busy with disaster relief responsibilities, Hillis said.

When the session finally was held, one newly trained participant left the following Monday to assist along the East Coast after Hurricane Irene.

Serving in New York

Also, in September and October, after helping in North Carolina, Hillis and 11 other disaster relief volunteers from Alabama were asked by the North American Mission Board to serve in New York after Hurricane Irene. These volunteers were to help oversee 200 college students who had been trained in mud-out through Virginia's disaster relief resources.

In September, Woodmont Baptist helped to fund and build a home for a man in Phil Campbell.

"They were through with it in three weeks," Hillis reported.

The busy year of disaster relief in Alabama "has shown a lot of brotherly love," Hillis said. "It shows that Jesus can do anything."

Hillis said it has demonstrated that God will provide help to the area where it is needed.

"I've got a great bunch of people up here that'll drop everything and go almost any time," Hillis continued.

Plus, Hillis said Colbert-Lauderdale Association Director of Missions Eddy Garner gives "110 percent support" to the disaster relief team.



Photo courtesy of Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association

'BROTHERLY LOVE' — Disaster relief volunteers from Colbert-Lauderdale Association help remove trees following the April 27, 2011, tornadoes.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, welcomes participants to the 2012 Senior Adult Evangelism Conference.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Musical trio Paid In Full provides special music for the 2012 Senior Adult Evangelism Conference at FBC Pelham on May 7.

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Senior adults from around state gather, worship at FBC Pelham

Toe-tapping, hand-clapping and rounds of “amens” were all part of the 2012 Senior Adult Evangelism Conference on May 7. The day’s excitement was felt in large part due to the lineup of talented speakers and performers that included evangelists Junior Hill and H. Bailey Stone, Charles Roesel and music trio Paid In Full.

The host campus, First Baptist Church, Pelham, was filled with senior adult groups from across Alabama who came to be challenged and encouraged by the conference messages. Organized by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) office of evangelism, the event kicked off at 9:30 a.m. with a warm welcome and prayer by Mike Shaw, pastor of First, Pelham, and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Before the first guest speaker stepped on stage, Mississippi-based trio Paid In Full performed its first of three song sets in pitch-perfect harmony.

“There are many ... gifted musicians around the country,” said Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for SBOM, in his introduction of Paid In Full. “But there are few gifted musicians with the sweet spirit that these men have.”

The three singers — lead Lance Moore, baritone Bradley Littlejohn and tenor Jeff Crews, a founding member of the group who filled in for absentee member Brock White — had the audience clapping along at the beginning of their first song.

Roesel, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Leesburg, Fla., and leader of the Charles L. Roesel Ministry Evangelism Training Center, followed as the morning’s first speaker.

“I am convinced the number one problem of the churches in America is that our understanding of God is far too small,” he shared with the audience. Delivering a message which focused primarily on the truths in John 3:16, Roesel spoke

of God’s love in a hurting world. He touched on several of the more than 70 ministries he was instrumental in beginning with a declaration that God loves hurting



SHAW

Adult EVANGELISM Conference

people. “We have forgotten how much God loves [them],” he remarked.

A rousing portion of Roesel’s message that produced an energetic response from many in the audience was his stance on “political correctness” in relation to the Christian faith. “I don’t care about being politically correct. I want to be theologically sound,” he stated emphatically.

Roesel ended his message with a touching true story and a gospel invitation. He noted that every Christian should take time to mentally go back to the cross and look in the face of the Savior, recognizing the love He demonstrated to all.

Following Roesel’s conclusion, a video segment highlighted the Evangelism Response Center (ERC), a ministry of the North American Mission Board. The ERC connects believers over the phone with someone who wants to hear the Good News.

Gilbreath personally encouraged the audience to volunteer in the ministry of the ERC.

Stone, retired evangelism director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, began his message by referencing the April 19, 1995, Oklahoma City, Okla., bombing when 168 people died.

“It was a tragedy of tragedies,” Stone said, adding life was considered “cheap” to the terrorists.

He went on to address various verses in Romans and shared that in Romans 1:14, Paul talked of being a debtor with an obligation to all mankind.

“Paul says, ‘I’m held by obligation and bound by duty to share the message of Jesus with a world that’s so desperately lost,’” Stone said.

“I think evangelism is one beggar taking another beggar to the bread that he or she has found — I think that’s the responsibility that all of us have,” he added later in his message.

Annette Martin, a member of South Shelby Baptist Church who sat near the stage during the event, remarked that she was amazed at Stone’s ability to quote God’s Word without any notes or Scripture refer-

ences in front of him.

She then looked around from her pew’s vantage point, surveying the approximately 900 people in attendance. “It’s exciting to see these buses that come from all over the state [to be here],” she added.

Hill was also encouraged by the attendance. “The senior adults seem to be very attentive and have a passion for the things of the Lord,” he said prior to his slot on the program.

“Being a senior adult myself, sometimes senior adults think, ‘I’m older — I can’t do much.’ But that’s not right. Some of the best days we have can be in our elder years.”

When asked what he wanted attendees to take from his message, Hill shared he hoped they would be reminded they are God’s children and they are not forsaken. “And even in bad and difficult times, the Lord is with us and will provide for our needs,” he said.

Paid In Full kicked off the afternoon session with more worship music and sang a favorite of Gilbreath’s — “Our First Day in Heaven.”

With his charisma and sense of humor, Hill delivered the day’s final message “Good News for Bad Times.” He caused the room to erupt in fits of laughter one moment and fall into serious contemplation the next.

Using Psalm 37:1–4, Hill relayed several points to govern believers in difficult times: refrain from fretting, rely on God’s faithfulness (He supplies what you don’t have, will sustain what you already have and satisfies you regardless of what you cannot have) and rejoice in His faithfulness.

Gilbreath said the Senior Adult Evangelism Conference has become one of his “favorite conferences.” “We will start working immediately ... for next year’s conference,” he shared.

“We will look around this country and find whom we believe to be the most outstanding senior adult speakers in the country [and] the best music.”



ROESEL



STONE

Gilbreath added that the conference is made possible by gifts through the Cooperative Program (CP). “This is ... giving back to Alabama Baptists because they’ve given through the CP to make this possible,” he explained. “We don’t take up an offering here ... we’re able to do that because of their gifts. It’s a great partnership.”

“[Many of the individuals attending] are pillars of our churches — they’ve carried us financially, they’ve carried us in leadership,” he said. “I want them to be loved on and go back to their church excited about the years they have remaining — give the best they have. [We have] a wealth of leadership sitting right here.”

“[Many of the individuals attending] are pillars of our churches — they’ve carried us financially, they’ve carried us in leadership. I want them to be loved on and go back to their church excited about the years they have remaining — give the best they have.”

Sammy Gilbreath

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Evangelist Junior Hill speaks at the Senior Adult Evangelism Conference and hopes attendees were reminded that ‘even in bad and difficult times, the Lord is with us and will provide for our needs.’

President Barack Obama announces his support for gay 'marriage' publicly during an interview with ABC News' Robin Roberts on May 9.

'Tragic contradiction'

Obama becomes 1st sitting US president to support gay 'marriage'

President Obama on May 9 became the first sitting U.S. president to support gay "marriage" publicly. The announcement was surprising perhaps only in its timing but could impact the general election.

The announcement came one day after North Carolinians overwhelmingly affirmed the traditional definition of marriage. Four other states will consider the issue this year, a year in which Obama is seeking re-election.

Obama seemed to be forced into stating his position after Vice President Joe Biden told NBC's "Meet the Press" three days earlier that he is "comfortable" with gays and lesbians "marrying."

Obama made the announcement during an interview with ABC News' Robin Roberts.

"I've just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married," Obama told Roberts. The full interview aired May 9 on ABC's "World News with Diane Sawyer."

Even before Obama was elected, some conservative and liberal pundits scoffed at the suggestion that Obama did not support gay "marriage." For instance, in 2008 he opposed California Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment that defined marriage as being between a man and a woman.

'Evolving' on the issue

In 2011 he ordered the Justice Department to stop defending in court the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law that defines marriage in the traditional sense, and he also announced support for a congressional bill that would overturn the law. And this year, his spokespersons announced he opposed proposed constitutional marriage amendments in North Carolina and Minnesota. He's also spoken twice at events held by the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay group. Yet all along, the White House maintained he merely was "evolving" on the issue.

Bryant Wright, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), reacted to the news with sadness.



"It is very depressing news when the president of the United States uses his power of influence to endorse same-sex 'marriage,'" Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., told Baptist Press. "Scripture is very clear that from the beginning, God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman. It is important for us who are followers of Jesus to uphold the sacredness of marriage according to Scripture."

Wright added, "Christians are called to pray for our government leaders, and it is now more important than ever to pray for President Obama in this very misguided decision."

It remains to be seen whether it will cost Obama politically. Although some polls now show majority support for gay "marriage," it has yet to translate to the ballot.

On May 8, North Carolina voters passed a constitutional amendment defining marriage between one man and one woman, and the margin of victory — 61–39 percent — surprised even supporters.

Thirty-two states now have voted on the issue, and traditional marriage has won

with an average margin of 67–33 percent.

Maine and Minnesota will consider the issue in November, and Maryland and Washington state likely will as well.

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, said he was "saddened" and "deeply disappointed" by Obama's announcement.

"No matter what culture may dictate with its ever-changing winds, I am grateful for the sure and unchanging source of authority we have in Scripture," Page said. "We must hold to God's Word on this and many other issues."

Jim Campbell, an attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund — which defends traditional marriage laws — said Obama's announcement could negatively impact families.

"The president has spoken eloquently about how fatherless homes often hurt children and society," Campbell said.

"Today's statement is a tragic contradiction that promotes the creation of even more fatherless and motherless homes."

President Clinton also supports gay "marriage," but he made his announcement in 2009, well after leaving office. (BP)

"It is very depressing news when the president of the United States uses his power of influence to endorse same-sex 'marriage.'"

***Pastor Bryant Wright
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church,
Marietta, Ga., and SBC president***

North Carolina becomes 30th state with marriage amendment

North Carolina voters have made the state the 30th in the U.S. to define marriage within a constitution as between a man and a woman, passing a proposal that had drawn nationwide attention by a margin even larger than pre-election surveys.

With all counties reported, the amendment passed easily May 8, 61–39 percent.

Critics said the North Carolina amendment was unnecessary because the state already defines marriage in the traditional sense, but supporters countered that North Carolina needed such an amendment to prevent a state court from legalizing gay "marriage," as happened in Massachusetts, Iowa and Connecticut. Judges can overturn statutes but not constitutional amendments.

The amendment passed despite supporters being outspent on ads by a margin of about 2-to-1, and despite opponents running TV ads claiming the amendment would negatively impact health insurance for children and the state's domestic violence

laws. Opponents avoided the issue of gay "marriage" altogether.

"This not only sends ... a message to North Carolina, but this sends a message to the whole country," Mark Creech, executive director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina, told the *Biblical Recorder* newspaper. "And that is what people of this country want to see — marriage remain as one man and one woman."

Protecting marriage

It wasn't the only loss of the night for national gay rights groups. In Colorado, the GOP-led House recessed without considering a same-sex civil unions bill, killing it for the session. Some observers thought it had the votes to pass.

After watching the North Carolina results, Tom Jensen of the left-leaning Public Policy Polling sent out a tweet, saying, "Hate to say it but I don't believe polls showing majority support for gay 'marriage' nationally. Any time there's a vote it doesn't back it up."

Of North Carolina's 100 counties, the amendment passed in 93. The coalition formed to promote the amendment, Vote For Marriage NC, didn't shy away from religion in urging voters to support it. One ad ended with an image of a Bible as a narrator explained that the amendment "protects marriage as the union of one man and one woman, just as God designed it." In the heart of the Bible Belt, the ad resonated. Having Billy Graham support the amendment in 14 newspaper ads the weekend before election day helped, too.

Tami Fitzgerald, chairwoman of Vote FOR Marriage NC, said her state had waited long enough to vote on the issue.

"We are thankful to God and to the people of North Carolina for joining together ... to preserve marriage as the union between one man and one woman in our state constitution," Fitzgerald said in a post-election statement. "North Carolinians have been waiting for nearly a decade to protect marriage — a sacred institution authored by God — from being redefined against the will of the people." (BP)

The people speak: A history of marriage votes

Every state that has voted on the issue of marriage at the ballot has affirmed the traditional definition of marriage being between a man and a woman.

Following is a list of each state that has voted on the issue. Unless noted, each vote involved a constitutional marriage amendment. Passage of the various proposals has come by an average margin of 67–33 percent.

1998

- ▶ Alaska, 68–32 percent
- ▶ Hawaii, 69–31 percent

2000

- ▶ California, 61–39 percent*
- ▶ Nevada, 70–30 percent (first of two required votes)
- ▶ Nebraska, 70–30 percent

2002

- ▶ Nevada, 67–33 percent (second of two required votes)

2004

- ▶ Arkansas, 75–25 percent
- ▶ Georgia, 76–24 percent
- ▶ Kentucky, 75–25 percent
- ▶ Louisiana, 78–22 percent
- ▶ Michigan, 59–41 percent
- ▶ Mississippi, 86–14 percent
- ▶ Missouri, 71–29 percent
- ▶ Montana, 67–33 percent
- ▶ North Dakota, 73–27 percent
- ▶ Ohio, 62–38 percent
- ▶ Oklahoma, 76–24 percent
- ▶ Oregon, 57–43 percent
- ▶ Utah, 66–34 percent

2005

- ▶ Kansas, 70–30 percent
- ▶ Texas, 76–24 percent

2006

- ▶ Alabama, 81–19 percent
- ▶ Colorado, 56–44 percent
- ▶ Idaho, 63–37 percent
- ▶ South Carolina, 78–22 percent
- ▶ South Dakota, 52–48 percent
- ▶ Tennessee, 81–19 percent
- ▶ Virginia, 57–43 percent
- ▶ Wisconsin, 59–41 percent

2008

- ▶ Arizona, 56–44 percent**
- ▶ California, 52–48 percent
- ▶ Florida, 62–38 percent

2009

- ▶ Maine, 53–47 percent***

2012

- ▶ North Carolina, 61–39 percent

*California's 2000 vote was an initiative and not a constitutional amendment.

**Arizona voters defeated a marriage amendment in 2006, only to pass one two years later.

***Maine's initiative was not a constitutional amendment but a "people's veto" that overturned a gay "marriage" law. (BP)

Americans split on whether homosexual behavior is sin, LifeWay research shows

Americans are split on whether homosexual behavior is a sin, and many do not appreciate if a church teaches it is sinful, according to a recent survey conducted by LifeWay Research.

The random-sample survey of more than 2,000 Americans asked, "Do you believe homosexual behavior is a sin?" Forty-four percent say yes and 43 percent say no. Thirteen percent are not sure.

Being a born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist Christian often corresponds with a negative view of homosexuality. Among those groups, 82 percent say homosexual behavior is a sin while 14 percent say it is not a sin. In contrast, 29 percent of all other religious groups say it is sinful and 51 percent say it is not.

Men and Americans without a college degree are more likely to say homosexuality is sinful. Forty-seven percent of men say it is a sin, but only 40 percent of women.

And, 49 percent of those without a college degree say homosexual behavior is a sin, compared with 35 percent who have a college degree.

"When asking questions like this to a general sampling of the population, it is important to note that people's definition of 'sin' may differ based upon their religious background and beliefs. We intentionally used the word, but also know it means different things to different people," said Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research. McConnell noted that in 2011, Gallup's annual Values and Beliefs poll approached the question of homosexuality asking if it was "morally acceptable."

"While we find 44 percent believe homosexuality is a 'sin,' Gallup reports 56 percent of Americans consider gay and lesbian relations morally acceptable," McConnell said.

Respondents were also asked the question: "If you were considering visiting or joining a church, would knowing that the church taught that homosexual behavior was sinful impact your decision positively or negatively or have no impact?"

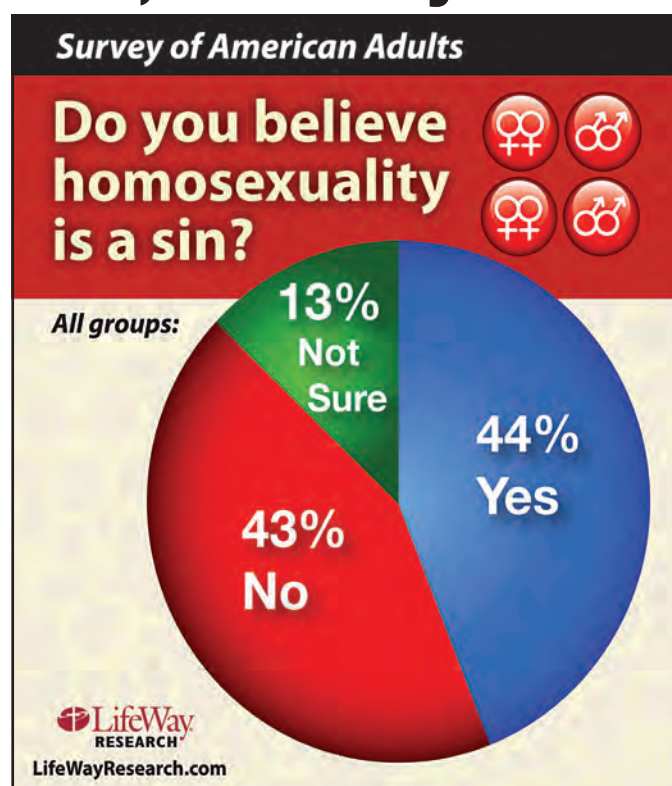
Only 26 percent of Americans say it would have a positive impact, while 36 percent say it would have a negative impact. Nearly a third (32 percent) say it would have no impact.

Black Southern Baptist leader rebukes Obama

A pastor who led the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to adopt a resolution in 2009 applauding the election of Barack Obama as America's first African-American president termed the president's May 9 endorsement of same-sex "marriage" a betrayal of the black church and an attack on the Christian faith.

"America is now a candidate for the same judgment received by Sodom and Gomorrah," Dwight McKissic, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas, wrote in a blog May 9. McKissic compared the moral impact of Obama's statement to the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina.

"This means that parents are now going to have an extremely difficult time teaching their children that marriage biblically and traditionally is between a man and a woman, when the president that many love and admire is now on record endorsing sodomy," McKissic said.



Of those who say homosexual behavior is sinful, a slight majority (54 percent) say a church teaching it is sinful would positively impact their decision to visit or join. But, among those who do not believe homosexual behavior is sinful, 74 percent say a congregation teaching it is sinful would negatively impact their decision to visit or join.

Negative reactions

"Conversations about sin are inherently religious in nature," McConnell said. "Merriam-Webster tells us the use of the word 'sin' is religious or moral and often specifically refers to a 'transgression of the law of God.' It is no surprise, then, that the sharpest negative reaction to a church specifically teaching that homosexual behavior is a sin comes from the least religious, those who do not attend religious services."

Regarding the effect of a church's stand on homosexuality, the survey found:

▶ Americans who never attend a place of worship strongly lean negative in their response to the impact of a church teaching

homosexual behavior is sinful. Those who never attend a place of worship are most likely to say this teaching would have a negative impact on them visiting or joining the church if they were considering it (72 percent) compared to only 21 percent of those who attend worship services more than once a week.

▶ Younger Americans take a more negative view of churches teaching against homosexuality. Those 18 to 29 (19 percent) are the least likely age group to say that a congregation teaching against homosexuality would have a positive impact upon their decision to visit or join. Those 65 and older are the most likely age group to say it would impact their decision positively (35 percent) and the least likely to say it would impact their decision negatively (29 percent).

▶ Men are more likely than women to look favorably on a church teaching homosexuality is sin. Twenty-nine percent of men and 22 percent of women say it would impact their decision positively. Thirty-four percent of men and 38 percent of women say it would impact their decision negatively.

▶ People in large (44 percent) and small (43 percent) cities are more likely to say a church's teaching against homosexuality would impact their decision negatively than those in suburbs (32 percent) and rural areas (26 percent).

"Americans remain evenly split on the moral and religious questions of whether homosexual behavior is a sin," McConnell said.

"It likely reflects different beliefs about Scripture and different beliefs about who defines sin."

Methodology: The online survey of 2,144 adult Americans was conducted Sept. 23–26, 2011, among a sample of an online panel representing the adult population of the United States. Responses were weighted by region, party, age, race, religion, gender and education to more accurately reflect the population and provides a 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed +2.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups.

(LifeWay)

McKissic said black church leaders should mobilize and address the matter with the same vigor, if not greater, that they used during the Civil Rights Movement. "If we don't, our children and grandchildren will pay a far greater price in suffering from a governmental sanction of same-sex 'marriage' than we would have under segregation," he commented.

A leading voice

McKissic, who is black, has been a leading voice in calling for greater representation by ethnic minorities in Southern Baptist denominational life. He recommended the 2009 resolution that, while in its final form criticized many of Obama's policies, hailed his election as a step forward for racial reconciliation.

Recently he threatened to bring a resolution to this year's SBC annual meeting calling for ouster of The Ethics & Religious Liberty

Commission President Richard Land unless he apologized for negative comments about media coverage of the shooting death of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin.

McKissic said that due to a lengthy apology by Richard Land May 9 (see story, page 3), that he no longer intends to introduce a resolution of rebuke when the convention meets in June.

"I fully accept his apology — without hesitation, or reservation — and appeal to all Christians, regardless of color, who were offended by his remarks to accept his apology and forgive him," McKissic wrote in a May 10 post at the SBC Voices blog (<http://sbcvoices.com>).

Instead, he said, he now plans to propose a resolution asking Southern Baptists "to go on record disavowing and repudiating the position of our beloved President Barack Obama as it relates to his position on affirming same-sex 'marriages.'" (ABP, BP)

Caribbean Baptists migrating to US 'not fitting in'

Caribbean Baptist immigrants have difficulty fitting into Baptist churches in the United States. This was revealed at a recent conference of Caribbean immigrants in New York City.

The April National Gathering of Caribbean Diaspora Baptist clergy, leaders and churches was billed as "a missionary event to acknowledge and initiate discussion on the emergence, contribution and role of Baptists in the continuum of the Caribbean Diaspora."

A common theme expressed by Caribbean immigrants at the conference was the difficulty to find a "church home" upon migrating into the U.S. Raymond Anglin, a general secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) during the 1980s, stated that he "experienced a kind of culture shock upon moving to the United States."

The Baptist churches he encountered in Florida and Georgia were "different from his experience in Jamaica in terms of authority, leadership, the attitude to and role of women, and in understanding of training."

Anglin, who said he now "has a fulfilling ministry as a Presbyterian pastor," indicated that his background in Jamaica prepared him for his current situation, as it "gave him an ecumenical dimension of ministry."

Delroy Murdock, pastor of a United Methodist Church in New York and a former Baptist pastor from Jamaica, said that, upon coming to the U.S., he "could not find a Baptist church that looked anything like

those in Jamaica." Edward Jenkins, another Methodist pastor in New York who was a Baptist pastor in the Caribbean, said he sees himself "as a Baptist in a Methodist church."

Karl Johnson, general secretary of the JBU, said the JBU is currently exploring ways of engaging in missions with Baptists in the Diaspora. He acknowledged that "the JBU has not grasped the opportunity presented by Caribbean people in the Diaspora."

He said the JBU had "dropped the ball and needed to repent and return to a missions consciousness."

Samuel Simpson, a Jamaican immigrant to the U.S., was honored for helping to pioneer the formation of Baptist churches that ministered to Caribbean immigrants in New York City, beginning in the 1960s. He recently retired as pastor of the Bronx and Wake Eden Baptist churches, two of the churches he founded. (BWA)

"The JBU has not grasped the opportunity presented by Caribbean people in the Diaspora."

Karl Johnson
Jamaica Baptist Union

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Blakely, Ga., is seeking resumes for the position of senior pastor. Candidates must possess at minimum a degree from a Baptist seminary. Send resumes to: FBC, P.O. Box 667, Blakely, GA 39823 or resume@fbcblakely.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Woodland Park Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, Ala., is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resume to: rockqcy@bellsouth.net or mail to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 292, Vance, AL 35490. For more information, call 205-246-6603.

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.

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.

MINISTER(S) OF MUSIC AND/OR YOUTH: FBC Attalla is currently accepting resumes for minister(s) of music and/or youth. Please mail resumes to: FBC Attalla, ATTN: Search Committee, 607 5th Street, NW, Attalla, AL 35954.

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.

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@pclnet.net, or mailed to: Youth Pastor Search Team, c/o Emmanuel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 145, Athens,

AL 35612.

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THRIFT STORE MANAGEMENT: Opening for thrift store management at Christian ministry. Retail experience required. Mail resume to: Thrift Store Director, P.O. Box 10472, Birmingham, AL 35202.

CHURCH SECRETARY: Parkview Baptist Church in Decatur, Ala., is looking for a full-time church secretary. Please send resumes to Personnel Committee at: Parkview Baptist Church, 305 Beltline Pl. SW, Decatur, AL 35603.

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 Pastor Mike Keech
Miflin Baptist Church, Elberta

I smile a lot more these days, and it's not because I have more money in my pocket or that I have all the new gadgets or everything is going my way; it's because my daughter loves me no matter how many hours I'm on the phone or how many times I tell her not to go out the dog door.

Day in and day out, she gives me a smile when I walk through the door after a long day and she loves to wake me up in the morning with a kiss.

Even as my daughter disobeys me at times and has to be disciplined, she will come back to me just a few minutes later and give me a big hug and kiss.

She loves me even though I have had to discipline her — just like God loves us even though we are sinners. Because we are sinners, God is unable to be in our presence, so God sent His one and only son, Jesus, to earth through a virgin (Matt. 1:18).

In Romans 3:23 God's Word states, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

All of us have sinned in our life, some big and some small, but it does not matter the size of the sin. Even though we all have sinned and continue to sin, Romans 5:8 tells us that God loves us anyway and that He gave His son for us.

We do not deserve heaven or life everlasting because we are sinners, and in Romans 6:23 God tells us that the wages of sin is death (or hell). However, the verse does not stop there. God tells us He gives us the free gift of God through eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. There are no strings attached. It's free!

How do you receive this free gift? According to Romans 10:9-10, "Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

The love of a child is something special and will make you smile every day, but the joy that you will find in the Lord will be just as special and life-changing. Do you want Jesus today? ☺

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist



Photo courtesy of Roger Willmore

The floor of Watari Bible Christ Church in Sendai, Japan, is all that remains after a tsunami hit the area in 2011.

Deerfoot Baptist assists young church in heart of Sendai, Japan

When a powerful offshore earthquake spawned a devastating tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011, the coastal city of Sendai was hard hit. In the aftermath, local Christians say residents are more open to the gospel, and one Alabama Baptist church is helping by supporting a new church plant in the heart of the ravaged city.

Since the tsunami, Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, in Birmingham Baptist Association, has partnered with the church plant in Sendai, known as Watari Bible Christ Church. Last year, Deerfoot Baptist sent a contribution of \$1,000 to Watari Church. In January, Deerfoot held a cake auction and raised an additional \$4,000 to send to Japan.

Deerfoot Baptist Pastor Roger Willmore visited the region in February. In addition to preaching at several Japanese churches, Willmore toured the tsunami-affected area and delivered the contribution to Watari Church.

"I have never seen anything like the tsunami-stricken region," Willmore said.

"I stood on the cement slab floor of all that remained of a church building, and as far as I could see in three directions, the land was virtually leveled."

Disaster relief efforts after the earthquake and tsunami were a key factor in the church plant, according to Ryo Iwahashi, president of the Christian humanitarian and disaster relief organization, Japan International Food for the Hungry

(JIFH), and one of those directly involved with the new church in Sendai.

According to Iwahashi, Koji Kumada, the pastor of Watari Church, had a vision to start a church in the area but no money to get started. To support his wife and seven children in the meantime, Kumada began managing a fleet of "yakitori" trucks, mobile kitchens serving broiled teriyaki chicken. After the tsunami, Kumada's trucks went to Sendai and served hot food to victims of the tsunami.

"This was a divine appointment," Iwahashi said. "The yakitori truck was used mightily to support the victims."

In a time when only cold foods were available, the hot yakitori was "not just a food to eat, but an encouragement to the people as well," Iwahashi said. As a result of Kumada's work in Sendai, the Watari Church plant got its start.

'More open to the gospel than ever'

"God gave Pastor Kumada a burden and vision for a church in the area," Willmore said.

"Now the Watari Church has a building and is baptizing new converts. The people of Sendai are more open to the gospel than ever due to the effective Christian presence there since the tsunami."

While the main objective of the church is to share the gospel with the lost, Iwahashi said that in Sendai, the word "lost" also refers to the loved ones, houses and belongings that were swept away by the tsunami. Many have lost their hope for the future as well, he said, which is why the Watari Church is so important.



Photo courtesy of Roger Willmore

Pastor Roger Willmore (right) delivers Deerfoot Baptist Church's financial gift to Koji Kumada, founding pastor of Watari Bible Christ Church.

"The church is reaching out to them with the love of Jesus Christ in a tangible way," Iwahashi said.

He added that the Watari Church is striving to reach out to the community, especially those who are still living in temporary housing and to local fishermen. Fishing is the primary business in the area, and JIFH is providing new fishing nets to assist the economic needs of the people, one more step toward restoring a more normal life to Sendai residents.

Willmore said Deerfoot Baptist will continue to support the Watari Church and relief efforts in Japan as part of their ongoing missions efforts. This summer, Deerfoot Baptist will host Manami Okubo, a missions volunteer in training from Osaka, Japan. The church will help Okubo practice her English before she goes to Nairobi, Kenya, to serve in JIFH ministries there.

"Manami will get some exposure in the ministry at Deerfoot and experience some hands-on training with Dr. Roger and some other members of the church," Iwahashi said.

Willmore said the work in Japan is just one facet of the missions efforts at Deerfoot Baptist. "The people at Deerfoot Baptist Church have a heart for missions," Willmore said. "This is what we do. It is who we are."

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Churches, associations sponsor ministry sites on raceway grounds

(continued from page 1)
associations and churches. Each site has a unique purpose and vision as to how they minister to the race fans, but all work to serve as the hands and feet of Christ as they do so. Each site also has a volunteer-led worship service for race fans on Sunday morning at 9 a.m.

The sites are Commuter Site, sponsored by North Highlands Baptist; Champions Corner, sponsored by churches from Southeast Alabama; Family Campground, sponsored by Columbia Baptist Association and churches; Infield, sponsored by Morgan and Russell Baptist associations and churches; West Park C, sponsored by St. Clair Association and churches; North Park, sponsored by Birmingham and Calhoun Baptist associations and churches; C & C Campground, sponsored by Coosa River Baptist Association and churches; Dove Ridge Campground, sponsored by First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

At Champions Corner Campground, Allen Singley, youth pastor at Grandview Baptist Church, Dothan, shared how Alabama Baptists have hosted a site at the unique alcohol-free campground since its opening in 2007.

"When it opened, the track actually called Alabama Raceway Ministries director Mike Jackson and asked about a group serving as campground host," he said. "We've been here since the first race this ... campground opened."

The ARM volunteers help race fans find where to park their RVs and provide meals.

"Any of the campers that want

to eat with us do," he said. "A lot of the things we do from parking campers to feeding them is about building relationships."

"Race fans are like good Baptists. They find what they like. They like to sit in the same spot. They like to camp in the same campground. So some of them we talk to throughout the year," Singley said. "They send us email and Facebook messages with different things that we can pray about for them."

And over the years of this ministry, many people have come to the saving knowledge of Christ.

Jackson remembered one incident that made it all real for him.

'All about God'

"A few years back I met Jerry in the North Park Campground. It was one of those weeks where it rained constantly and attendance was light at our Sunday morning worship service," Jackson said. "To tell the truth, I was ready to go home. We went into our closing prayer and I bowed my head. When I raised my head standing right in front of me was Jerry."

"Despite my attitude and the rain, it was still all about God, not me," he said. "I was able to lead Jerry in the sinner's prayer right there."

As the NASCAR sprint cup drivers spend the latter part of Saturday morning qualifying for the race on Sunday, there's a buzz in the infield ministry center. Children and parents are gathered around tables with small pieces of wood, painting them and dressing them up for that evening's "Timothy Cup"

races that will take place following the afternoon race.

Zach Kendrick, a volunteer with ARM ministry partner Timothy Cup Ministries, said, "We have different things like crafts and a wooden block car that is already ready to go. (In the evening) we are going to have a pine wood derby race. It's an opportunity to bring kids in to our site from inside the infield and have the opportunity to share the gospel."

With the recent Talladega race where Brad Keselowski brought home his sixth career cup victory, Kendrick is attending his 22nd Timothy Cup race in a row.

"When I first started coming, I didn't know Christ," Kendrick said. "After I gave my life up to Christ as a teenager, I can tell a difference in myself personally. ... I'm not just here for a race. I'm here to share the gospel."

"People come in, maybe with a beer in their hand, or whatever. But we don't care," he said. "We want to share the gospel and meet people where they are at, just love on them."

Over at West Park C, Bud Jackson, a member of Bethel Baptist Church, Odenville, talked about his motivation to minister to race fans. "We are in a dying and lost world, and I don't want people to spend eternity without Christ."

Many ARM volunteers said they believe if Christ was here walking on earth today, this is where He would be — at the racetrack among the fans.

For more information about ARM, visit www.alsbom.org/racewayministries.



Photo by Matt Gamble

PRAYER — Mike Jackson (right), Alabama Raceway Ministries director and director of the office of leadership and church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, leads a prayer for EMT workers.

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About Alabama

Metro counties Alabama's 'growth engines'

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Alabama remains one of the slowest-growing states in the Southeast. Since the 2010 Census, the state's population has increased at only half the national rate.

The areas that are growing are concentrated in counties surrounding the larger cities, which also tend to have better-educated populations and higher incomes than the state as a whole. The state's economic development is tied to these areas' expansion.

The Census Bureau divides counties into three groups for statistical purposes. "Metropolitan" counties are linked economically to a large city (50,000 or more). "Micropolitan" counties also have economic ties, but to a smaller city. The remaining counties, mostly rural, have no such connections.

Alabama has 11 metropolitan areas covering 27 counties. Another county is part of the Columbus, Ga., metro area. These 28 counties contain 71 percent of the state's population, are home to about 80 percent of its college graduates and account for 75 percent of all personal income in the state. They have had a net gain of 23,000 residents since the 2010 Census, while the rest of the state has had no net population growth.

Metro areas are named after their central city or cities. Ala-

bama's 11 are (from largest to the smallest): Birmingham-Hoover, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Decatur, Dothan, Florence, Auburn-Opelika, Anniston-Oxford and Gadsden.

In these 28 metro counties, personal income per capita in 2010 averaged almost \$34,500. An estimated 83 percent of the adult population has at least a high school diploma and 25 percent a college degree or better. Since 2010, these areas have added 53 residents for every 10,000 in the Census count.

By way of contrast: in the state's 24 rural counties, personal income per capita in 2010 averaged about \$27,400; only 73 percent of the adult population has at least a high school diploma and 12 percent a college degree or better. Since 2010, these counties actually have lost about 68 persons for every 10,000 in the Census count.

The state's 15 micropolitan counties fall between the metro and rural areas on all these measures, suggesting that the numbers are related. They point to the importance of removing barriers to growth in the state's urban areas and increasing educational attainment.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

Kentucky convention cuts staff, looks to institutions for additional savings

The Kentucky Baptist Convention's (KBC) Mission Board approved a plan May 8 to overhaul the structure of the convention and its staff.

The proposal, presented by KBC Executive Director Paul Chitwood, passed with a strong majority vote of the board. Only five dissenting votes were cast.

With the latest round of cuts, the second in a year, 43 full-time staff will remain at the Kentucky Baptist Building and eight full-time Baptist campus ministers will serve university and college campuses across the state.

The convention's organizational structure now will consist of five ministry teams, consolidated from the previous six. With the exception of the executive office team and the business services team, all other teams will undergo name changes to better reflect their purposes, Chitwood noted.

Revamped ministry teams

The ministry teams now will be known as the evangelism and church planting team; the church consulting and revitalization team; and the missions mobilization team.

The new structure will allow the KBC to achieve its newly stated

mission, Chitwood said, which is to operate as a convention "created by churches, for churches, to help churches reach Kentucky and the world for Christ."

While not the first reorganization in KBC history, this one was necessitated by an overall drop in Cooperative Program (CP) gifts from Kentucky Baptists over the last decade, Chitwood explained.

In March, all KBC employees were offered early retirement or voluntary resignation incentive packages.

It was announced May 7 that 23 full-time and four part-time employees accepted the offers and will depart June 30.

Seventeen who are 60 or older as of Dec. 31 will receive full retirement benefits, regardless of years of service, and additional cash benefits based on years of service.

Severance packages for employees younger than 60 include 90 days of wages and benefits. Some have already found other employment, while others are now looking for jobs.

Sources said severance agreements included a clause that those accepting the incentives would not disparage the convention.

Longtime leaders departing include Assistant Executive Director

Steve Thompson, who leaves after 13 years of service at age 63, and Robert Reeves, communications director since 1998.

Additionally, nine contracted employees will not have their work renewed as of Aug. 31.

Chitwood indicated that enough employees accepted the incentive packages that further layoffs were not needed.

'In line with CP funding'

The staff reduction "brings the organization in line with current Cooperative Program funding realities and the desire of Kentucky Baptists to get more resources to the worldwide mission field," Chitwood said.

Kentucky Baptist messengers voted in 2010 to achieve an even split of CP funds to KBC and Southern Baptist Convention causes by 2020.

As part of the reorganization plan, Chitwood also intends to form a study committee to evaluate the convention's "collegiate ministry strategy" and its relationship with its entities and institutions.

"These two aspects of our work represent a huge investment of the CP funds coming from our churches," he said.

Those entities and institutions include Campbellsville University, Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Crossings Ministries, the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, Oneida Baptist Institute, Sunrise Children's Services, University of the Cumberlands and the Western Recorder. (BP, ABP)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 20

Explore the Bible

By Cecil Taylor

Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

HE OFFERS SALVATION: BELIEVE

Luke 23:32–49

The Crucifixion (32–38)

The Romans led away two robbers to execute with Jesus. Apocryphal Gospels named them variously — Zoathan and Cain, Dismas and Gestas, Titus and Dumachus — but Scripture leaves them anonymous.

At “the place” called “The Skull” (in Aramaic, “Golgotha”) the execution squad hung Jesus on a cross between the two criminals. No evidence shows Golgotha was a hill. Indeed, Romans usually put crosses beside well-traveled roads so passersby could see the fate of anyone who challenged the empire and be deterred. Usually victims hung close to the ground, not five or six feet up in the air.

The Persians originated crucifixion, just impaling their victims on a sharp stake. The Romans refined it so victims would suffer. Some victims were tied to their crosses; Jesus was nailed to His. Nails through the forearms near the wrists ran between the ulna and radius. His feet had been nailed sideways to the cross with a single spike through a wooden cleat, then through the right side of his right ankle and the right side of his left ankle (creating a twist of about 90 degrees at the waist). Executioners had shattered his lower legs with a single blow that crushed the right leg and cracked the left leg against the edge of the upright.

Victims of crucifixion died from any number of causes: exposure; dehydration; fever from the wounds of the whips and the nails; drastic drop in blood pressure that led to congestive heart failure. But most victims suffocated. Suspension by the arms leaves the ribs expanded so the victim must lift himself on his spikes/ropes to breathe out so long as he has strength. When the crucified had no strength left to push himself up for a breath, he suffocated. Sometimes the soldiers even built fires at the foot of a cross so the heat and smoke made it harder to breathe. To hasten death, the soldiers broke the legs of the men crucified with Jesus. But Jesus was already dead when they came to check. His execution-

ers gambled for Jesus’ garments. Crucifixion was in the nude to add to the shame and because the condemned had no further use for clothing. Bystanders watched but the Jewish rulers and soldiers mocked. Pilate ordered an inscription placed over the head of Jesus telling the reason for His execution: “This is the King of the Jews.”

If Jesus was God’s Messiah, one robber argued, He ought to save Himself and two crucified with Him. The other disagreed: “You should fear God and not speak. We are getting what we deserve (justice demanded the death penalty) but Jesus is innocent.” Then he turned to Jesus. “Remember me when you come in your kingdom.” It is not clear what the robber thought would be the nature of Jesus’ kingdom or when it might come. But for him it was enough that Jesus was its king and promised they would be together in the future he was about to enter. The blessing would come not in the far distant future but on that very day.

His Death (39–46)

From noon (“the sixth hour”) till three (“the ninth hour”) darkness shrouded the land. It could not be due to a solar eclipse because the crucifixion took place at Passover when the moon is full. The “veil of the temple,” 60 feet by 30 feet and 5 inches thick, that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, was ripped in two, probably to show that through Christ’s death God had opened the way into the divine presence for all (see Heb. 6:19, 9:3, 10:20). At last Jesus drew a breath and cried out, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” This was the going-to-bed prayer every Jewish boy learned at his mother’s knee, on the order of “Now I lay me down to sleep.” And He breathed His last.

Its Effect (47–49)

The centurion had heard the mockery but concluded truth was on the side of Jesus, not the scorners. He “praised God” and publicly confessed that Jesus was “a righteous man.”

The spectators mourned and beat their breasts in guilt over this gross miscarriage of justice.

Bible Studies for Life

By James R. Barnette

Associate Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Samford University

A LEGACY OF FAITH

Genesis 22:1–3, 7–14; 26:2–5

Faith Tested (22:1–3, 7–10)

This story is one of the most personal and captivating among the Patriarchal accounts. For Abraham, God’s command to sacrifice Isaac is incomprehensible. Abraham’s young son is given by God after long delay, and Isaac is the only link that can lead to the promised greatness of Abraham’s seed (see Gen. 15). Now it appears that the boy is to be given back to God in sacrifice. In following his call away from Ur (Gen. 12), Abraham had cut himself off from his whole past; now he must give up his whole future. The text makes it clear that God is fully aware of the greatness of this sacrifice: “Take your son, your only son. He is the one you love. Take Isaac.”

In the Old Testament, God’s prerogative to “test” His followers is often during times of syncretism — that is, when Israelites are tempted to incorporate other gods into their belief system. The Ahab-Jezebel period (1 Kings 17–19, 21) is one example among many such times. The testing of Israel by God is to determine if Israel would trust only the Lord or if it would at the same time look to other gods. In our present time of religious tolerance and cultural relativism, what severe tests might our church or our nation have to face in order to prove our unmitigated devotion to the Sovereign Lord? Some might find the notion of testing primitive and limited to the Old Testament. However, the early church in the New Testament knew there were times of testing (Mark 13:9–13; 1 Peter 1:7; 2 Peter 2:9). One dimension of testing is the temptation to accommodate the world in a way that leads to a compromised faith. Many complacent Christians cringe at having to decide between full devotion and compromise. When our faith is severely tested, God desires us to respond as readily as Abraham.

Faith Proven (22:11–14)

The fact that Abraham obeys shows that he trusts God will find a way into the future. God had found a way to fulfill the promise of a son when nothing seemed possible. Given that

experience, Abraham trusts that this equally impossible situation will not be beyond God’s power. Abraham trusts that God’s promise and God’s command are not fully contradictory; whatever conflict there might be, God can resolve it if He wills it. Our calling is to be faithful to the God Who tests and provides, Who has sovereign authority and Who blesses with good gifts. One reason that Abraham remains faithful is that he realizes how blessed he has been to have the gift of Isaac at all. As Gerhard Von Rad states, Abraham recognizes and appreciates Isaac as a “pure gift.” This idea of pure gift is what began John Claypool on the road to healing after the death of his young daughter, Laura Lue. In “Tracks of a Fellow Struggler,” Claypool recounts his reading of this story and realizing that, just as Isaac’s life was a gift to Abraham, so Laura Lue’s life was a gift to Claypool. Indeed, Claypool realized that life itself is pure gift and, like Abraham, he should be utterly grateful and willing to give his daughter’s life back to the One Who created her and Who rules over all of life.

One cannot help but find parallels in this story to the story of Job. Like Job, Abraham is a blameless man (Gen. 17:1) who fears God; and like Job, Abraham is ready and willing to trust the God Who gives and Who takes away.

Faith Multiplied (26:2–5)

Famines occur in Palestine at times of insufficient rainfall. In such times the nomadic people are enticed by the distant and more fruitful Egypt. However, Isaac is told by God not to migrate to Egypt. Isaac is to live where God tells him to live. Here God reminds Isaac of the promise that He had issued to Isaac’s father, the promise of a blessed land where the number of their children would be “as many as the stars of the sky.” It is worth noting that the now deceased Abraham is mentioned eight times in chapter 26, and that the word “father” occurs six times. Isaac was his father’s son, and both of them were Patriarchs of the promise.

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

Christian Crossword

By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

1. ____ and honor are her clothing. (Prov. 31:25)

8. And ____ gave names to all. (Gen. 2:20)

12. United States of America. (abbr.)

13. Save the beast that ____ upon. (Neh. 2:12; 2 words)

15. Casteth forth his ____ like morsels. (Ps. 147:17)

16. He must ____ his own family well. (1 Tim. 3:4 NIV)

18. I will ____ in the house of the Lord. (Ps. 23:6)

20. Mister. (abbr.)

21. Blessed be the Lord God of _____. (Gen. 9:26)

23. Id est. (abbr.)

24. Each. (abbr.)

25. ____ shall be ____ for the congregation. (Num. 19:9; 2 words)

27. Greater love hath no _____. (John 15:13)

28. I will give you ____ in due season. (Lev. 26:4)

31. Mom.

32. There should be time ____ longer. (Rev. 10:6)

33. ____ forth.

34. He shall eat at my _____. (2 Sam. 9:11)

38. Second letter in the Greek alphabet.

40. Roebuck, and the fallow. (Deut. 14:5)

41. And ____ did that which was right. (1 Kings 15:11)

43. ____ and his wife hid themselves. (Gen. 3:8)

44. Internal Revenue Service. (abbr.)

45. Passed through the ____ Sea. (Heb. 11:29)

46. Id. ____ superego.

47. Bass horn.

50. Is the seed yet in the ____? (Hag. 2:19)

53. They lightened the _____. (Acts 27:38)

55. ____ apple.

56. The ____ of violence is in their hands. (Isa. 59:6)

58. To ____ with oil.

60. To ____.

61. ____ are created equal. (2 words)

62. Atomic Energy Commission. (abbr.)

Down

1. As snow in _____. (Prov. 26:1)

2. Former emperor of Russia.

3. He ____ to meet them. (Gen. 18:2)

4. In my prayers ____ and day. (2 Tim. 1:3)

5. Canst thou speak ____? (Acts 21:37)

6. Ye shall observe ____ do. (Deut. 12:1)

7. Hand, head. (abbr.)

9. Thou shalt surely _____. (Gen. 2:17)

10. He wrapped it in _____. linen cloth. (Matt. 27:59; 2 words)

11. A dark pigmented cancer.

14. To delete.

17. There is ____ not unto death. (1 John 5:17; 2 words)

19. ____ will shew the interpretation. (Dan. 2:4)

22. For the body is not one _____. (1 Cor. 12:14)

26. All the coasts of ____? (Joel 3:4)

29. And the ____ arose. (Job 29:8)

30. Ninth letter in the Greek alphabet.

35. Good-bye in Spanish.

36. Emergency Room. (abbr.)

37. International Atomic Energy Agency. (abbr.)

38. A tree of tropical Africa.

39. People shall answer and say _____. (Deut. 27:15)

42. South Dakota. (abbr.)

45. Symbol for rubidium.

48. I set my king ____ my holy hill. (Ps. 2:6)

49. ____ the seventh day. (Gen. 2:2)

51. An expert.

52. Route. (abbr.)

54. ____ is the father of Canaan. (Gen. 9:18)

55. I ____ no pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3)

57. Symbol for aluminum.

59. Symbol for sodium.

RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp

JIMMY NEEDHAM

Clear the Stage
Inpop Records

Jimmy Needham has released his fifth record (his fourth studio effort for Inpop records), "Clear the Stage." Produced by Ed Cash, with most songs written or co-written by Needham, this CD takes a different path than his prior releases.

There's not a single theme work. Rather, the common thread is "how all of the facets of my personal life keep leading me to an expanding view of Christ," Needham explains.

The title cut, "Clear the Stage," written by Ross King while Needham was still in high school, is a simple ballad with powerful lyrics. Upon hearing it for the first time Needham said: "It shipwrecked me." With Needham's emotional delivery, that will likely be your first thought as well.

The record's lead single started life as Needham's prayer, born of

his feelings of inadequacy as he began this project. "If I Ever Needed Grace" is a vulnerable, personal look into Needham's life and struggles. This song singlehandedly sets the tone for this very personal and honest record and is easily the best song on the CD.

Perhaps the most personal song on the album is "The Only One," a brutally honest inward look with the ultimate realization that God is the only true satisfaction in his life.

Needham's fans have come to expect honesty in his music, and they certainly won't be disappointed with his latest effort.

NEWWORLDSON

Rebel Transmission

New Day Christian/Platinum Pop Entertainment

Let's start by saying this is NOT your typical modern contemporary Christian record. Canadian band "Newworldson" are well known for their eclectic style, a combination of pop, gospel, R&B and soul, a thoroughly retro sound that at times can sound like the best of Paul Simon, Aaron Neville, Robert Parker or (insert your favorite

'60s group here). It's always fresh, always retro, always toe-tapping, always good music. Yep, it's that wide open.

Featuring the critically acclaimed Chops Horns (Alicia Keys, The Police, Rolling Stones), this is music that I can get my teeth into. I've always loved horn-based rock, and while you can't really call much of this rock, the gospel and soul sounds will have you re-living the best of '60s music, only with uplifting, Christ-centric lyrics. I haven't been this excited about a record in a long time.

For me, it's tough to pick the record's best, so we'll look to what's making waves in the radio world. "Learning to Be the Light" is currently No. 6 on Billboard's Christian Songs Chart and is certainly among the best on the record. "Old Time Religion" and "Son of Man" are showcased on the record and are great songs. Just know that, if

you like eclectic, retro, R&B and soul, you're going to love everything on this CD. Finally, uplifting Christian music for those of us who loved '60s R&B!

LARA LANDON

Overcome

Laralandon.com

Lara Landon released her sophomore record "Overcome" on May 1. If you like angst-driven piano and strings-based pop, maybe you'll like this record. I don't.

Landon, a California native and Belmont University graduate, enjoyed modest success with her debut project, "Beloved," produced by Michael Omartian, with songwriting by the likes of Jason In-

gram and Mitch Dane. Her well-received radio single "Closer" came from that effort.

"Overcome" is co-produced by Ingram and Landon and again includes help from Mitch Dane, but this record lacks the feeling or conviction of anything from her debut release.

Perhaps her next record, assuming there is one, will build on the strength of her first release. Landon has a strong and beautiful voice, and I look forward to another good project from her in the future.



Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Fighting Fear with Faith: Weathering the Storms with God's Promises

Denise George. Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2011. 220 pp. (Paperback).

Snakes, heights, violence, evil — all things that merit healthy fear, writes Denise George. Healthy fear is a gift from God to protect us. But what about other, less healthy fears — the paralyzing fears that harm, rather than protect? Things that produce panic attacks and generalized anxiety? George calls these "pretenders," tools of the enemy sent to harm us.

In this small, engaging volume aimed primarily at women, George accomplishes a lot, examining healthy and unhealthy fears, offering promises and examples from the Bible for conquering fear, and scriptural prayers to pray when faced with different fear-producing situations. The final section consists of two Bible studies. This is the kind of book that you read, then keep close by for future reference.

George is well-known in writing circles in Alabama; she has written more than two dozen books and teaches on writing in various formats.

At Wit's End: Good Words for Bad Times

Junior Hill. Hartselle: JHI Publishers, 2011. 159 pp. (Paperback).

Junior Hill may well be the best known and most loved of all contemporary evangelists in Alabama, in great demand as a preacher both in the state and elsewhere. This book is an illustration of what makes Hill so sought after. "At Wit's End" is a book of encouragement for those who may be facing difficulties in their lives — all, according to the author, who have ever felt "perplexed, confused, cast down, and at wit's end."

The book is a collection of chapters dealing with different issues Christians face, such as having faith whether the Lord answers our prayers the way we hoped or not, assurance of God's forgiveness of our sins and trusting in God's timing. Hill buttresses his words with Scripture and uses stories, many of them personal, to make the meaning come alive to the reader. Hill's trademark humor threads throughout the book, especially in the tongue-in-cheek description of "The Blow Up Church" in the last chapter.

If you are one of the many fans of Junior Hill (and who isn't?),

you will want to add this volume to your collection.

Walk Strong, Look Up: The Most Powerful Exercise for your Body and Soul

Chantel Hobbs. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2011. 233 pp. (Paperback).

Chantel Hobbs has written several books on the subject of maintaining a healthy weight through diet and exercise; "Walk Strong, Look Up" will not disappoint her fans. After a lengthy introduction, part motivational coaching, part practical tips, Hobbs launches into a fitness/weight loss plan designed around a four-week walking regimen that includes detailed coaching from Hobbs and a hefty dose of communion with God through prayer, praise and meditation.

The plan is a simple start-slow-and-build routine that takes the non-exerciser to a healthy level of walking in four weeks. Embedded in the instructions are passages to meditate on and ideas to grapple with. The final section of the book addresses eating for weight loss maintenance, exercises for building muscle and motivation to continue beyond the initial four weeks.

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **Loving, Bailey Flanigan Series #4**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
2. **The Harbinger**, Jonathan Cahn (Charisma Media)
3. **The Fiddler, Home to Hickory Hollow Series #1**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
4. **Longing, Bailey Flanigan Series #3**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
5. **Illusion**, Frank Peretti (Howard Books)
6. **Downfall, Intervention Series #3**, Terri Blackstock (Zondervan)
7. **Half-Stitched Amish Quilting Club**, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
8. **Leaving, Bailey Flanigan Series #1**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
9. **Learning, Bailey Flanigan Series #2**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
10. **Courageous**, Randy Alcorn, Alex Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick (Tyndale)

Nonfiction

1. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
3. **Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. **The 5 Love Languages**, Gary Chapman (Moody)
5. **One Thousand Gifts**, Ann Voskamp (Zondervan)
6. **Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
7. **Not a Fan**, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)
8. **The Resolution for Women**, Priscilla Shirer (B&H)
9. **Nearing Home**, Billy Graham (Thomas Nelson)
10. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)

a PLATFORM for faith

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Memphis Grizzlies' Pondexter keeps 'faith-based, family-first attitude'

Quincy Pondexter didn't always mind his Ps and Qs while growing up in a California church where his grandparents were pastors. Despite the watchful eye of Charles and Bess Gooch, both ordained ministers, Pondexter said, "I remember being that kid in the pews at church clowning around."

A shooting guard/small forward for the Memphis Grizzlies, Pondexter remembers more.

"My family instilled in my heart to always have faith. I was really blessed to grow up the way I did. Not a lot of people have that background. I keep a faith-based, family-first attitude and it translates to the game of basketball."

Faith has been his central position as he plays among the best athletes in the world. Drafted 26th overall in the 2010 NBA Draft, Pondexter is averaging 5.7 points and 1.7 rebounds per game while logging an average of 17 minutes.

As a senior at the University of Washington, he was first team All-Pac-10, has the school record for the number of games played (136) and is third in career scoring (1,786 points).

Pondexter, 24, was drafted by the Oklahoma City Thunder and immediately traded to the New Orleans Hornets. The Hornets traded him to the Grizzlies in December 2011.

The Grizzlies' 41-25 regular season record provided a franchise-best winning percentage (.621) and gave them home-court advantage for the first time in history. They opened the first round of the Western Conference series against the Los Angeles Clippers on April 29.

At press time, the Grizzlies were down 2-3 in the series.

Pondexter loves basketball but there is something he loves more.

"I love being a Christian. I know I have accepted Christ as my Savior. Jesus means the world to me. He sacrificed His life for our sins. Christ is the best," said Pondexter, 24.

"As I get older, I feel like I am getting closer and closer to God in my faith because I know without Him there would be no me."

As he reads his Bible for focus and inspiration, he has seen examples of Christ overcoming tribulation.

"You can grow from there," said Pondexter, a member of Family Community Church in Fresno, Calif. "I know the Lord is there for me. He's been with me through some of my best moments and some of my worst moments."

What has made him good in basketball is versatility, nonstop resilience and defense.

"He is definitely a great defender," said Grizzlies guard Tony Allen. "He can knock down threes and he is definitely a hard worker."

Pondexter has impressed Grizzlies forward Zach Randolph by his professionalism and no-complaints attitude. "Coach (Lionel Hollins) is hard on him," Randolph said. "He understands Coach wants him to be better. He doesn't argue back. ... I am proud of him, real proud of him."

Termed an encourager, "a great teammate" and "quiet" by Allen, Pondexter, who is called "Q" by teammates and coaches, engages himself in the game.

"I am someone who dedicates his heart to the



Photo courtesy of NBAE

Quincy Pondexter

game. I have been given this opportunity. I want to make the most of it," he said. "Growing up, you realize you don't take anything for granted."

Memphis forward Rudy Gay said Pondexter gives it his all.

"I had the chance to go and hang with his family and see how authentic, faith-oriented people they are. I see where he gets it from," Gay said.

To use the NBA as a platform for his faith is an opportunity to speak "volumes" to "worlds of people."

"They want to know who you are. They want to be a part of you because they love the game of basketball," Pondexter said.

"I want to be a role model. ... I feel like those are my best times when I am right morally and my heart is pure. I am always going to try to do things the right way. ... I would want people to say that I have the best heart in the world and that I care about others, that I am humble and that I am a good guy."

Pondexter's favorite Bible verse, Proverbs 3:5-6, has fueled his basketball journey: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."

From the night he was drafted by Oklahoma City but immediately traded to New Orleans, to arriving in Memphis, this verse has been what Pondexter has lived by, he said.

"Our paths are already written out," Pondexter said.

If Memphis plays on, winning an NBA championship is not Pondexter's most important goal.

"I think everyone's is to get to heaven," he said. "I think that is the best goal."

And Allen said, "I can't really talk about another man's faith but obviously God has been good to him. The sky is the limit for him." ❧

World of Religion

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Newly found Israeli artifacts support Solomon's Temple

JERUSALEM — Archaeologists have unearthed a trove of artifacts dating back to the time of the biblical King David that they say closely correspond to the description of Solomon's Temple found in the Book of Kings.

Hebrew University archaeologist Yosef Garfinkel said the find "is extraordinary" because it marks the first time that shrines from the time of the early Israelite kings were found. In addition, two small, well-preserved models discovered in the excavations closely resemble elements described in the Bible.

The multiyear excavations took place at Khirbet Qeiyafa, a fortified city about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem, adjacent to the Valley of Ella where, the Bible says, the ancient people of Israel were encamped when David slew Goliath.

"Over the years, thousands of animal bones were found, including sheep, goats and cattle, but no pigs," he said. "Now we uncovered three cultic rooms with various cultic paraphernalia, but not even one human or animal figurine was found."

According to Garfinkel, this suggests that the inhabitants observed the biblical bans on pork and graven images — "and thus practiced a different cult than that of the Canaanites or the Philistines" of the time.

'Joni and Friends,' Lausanne Movement team up

AGOURA HILLS, Calif. — The Joni and Friends International Disability Center is engaging in a month-long conversation on the website of The Lausanne Movement focusing on evangelism to people with disabilities. The Global Conversation Project is designed to spur the local church into action and to emphasize selected portions of the Cape Town Commitment, which resulted from the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2010.

"We at Joni and Friends are passionate about taking the gospel to people with disabilities, and we want to highlight the section of the Cape Town Commitment called 'Christ's Peace for People with Disabilities' during this month," said ministry founder and CEO Joni Eareckson Tada, who has for many years served as senior associate on disability concerns for The Lausanne Movement.

Conversations are conducted in eight different languages so that individuals from many nations can be involved. For more information or to sign up, visit conversation.lausanne.org.

UMC cancels vote on gay clergy, same-sex 'marriage'

TAMPA, Fla. — United Methodists concluded their General Conference on May 4 without voting on gay clergy or same-sex "marriage," a surprising end to a disappointing week for gay activists.

On May 3, the nearly 1,000 delegates gathered in Tampa, Fla., soundly rejected two motions that would have amended the United Methodist Church's (UMC) book of doctrine and rules, which calls the practice of homosexuality "incompatible with Christian teaching." After those votes, protesters flooded the convention floor, briefly shutting down the conference.

Conference planners, evangelical leaders and gay and lesbian advocates met later that day and determined that there was little use in holding additional contentious debates on homosexuality, according to several sources. Proposals to ordain gay clergy and bless same-sex unions held little chance of passing, the parties agreed, and so were pushed to the back of the agenda.

The UMC's policy remains that ministers cannot marry same-sex couples and churches cannot host same-sex weddings.

Nazi eugenics 'still alive,' says Vatican newspaper

VATICAN CITY — Proponents of euthanasia and aborting chronically ill fetuses use the same arguments that were once used by the Nazis to promote their eugenics program of mass extermination, according to the Vatican's semiofficial newspaper.

The article appears in the May 5 issue of *L'Osservatore Romano* and is signed by Lucetta Scaraffia, an Italian historian.

Scaraffia's article comes in the wake of the Italian translation of a 1920 book by two German scholars, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, that set the ideological foundations for the Nazi program of extermination of disabled and incurably sick people.

The authors of the 1920 book — "Allowing the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Living" — proposed that the lives of the chronically ill or of the mentally and physically disabled were "unworthy of being lived" and should be given a "charitable death." ❧