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By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Photo courtesy of David Parks

Lamar Nappier and his son participate in the nonprofit missions fund-raising program from their farm in Ider.

Alabama Baptist farm families support missions by raising cows

Frisky calves are a familiar sight at Richard Tabor's farm in Dutton, but two born this spring have a special "mission." The calves were born to cows that Tabor purchased at the Fort Payne Stockyard earlier this year. The cows, eight months bred when Tabor bought them, were paid for by Steer Inc., a nonprofit missions fund-raising program headquartered in Bismarck, N.D. Tabor tagged the cows for Steer, then put them in the pasture with the rest of his herd of about 20 cows and calves.

The calves will stay with Tabor's herd until they are ready for sale. When they are sold, Steer will receive the profits and distribute the funds to organizations like World Vision,

Campus Crusade for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and other missions efforts around the world.

Tabor said his primary responsibility is to be a good steward of the cows. "Steer doesn't make any demands on the farmer or rancher," he said. "All I'm required to do is feed them and just do what I do with all of them."

International partnership

Tabor first heard about Steer when missionary Jonathan O'Brien spoke at the Cowboy Church at DeKalb County, Rainsville, in Marshall Baptist Association. O'Brien, a native of Birmingham, serves as Asia ministry training coordinator for Youth Ministry International (YMI), an organization that trains youth leaders around the world to reach their communities for Christ. O'Brien, a member of South Roebuck Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association, is currently in the United States raising financial support for his work in Asia. While YMI has partnered with Steer for several years, O'Brien has been connected to the organization for just a few months. In that time, he has visited several churches around the state to explain

how farmers can support global missions efforts simply by taking on the responsibility of an extra cow in the herd.

"Many people still think I am asking them to give me a cow, but what I want is for them to raise one instead," O'Brien said.

Farmers and ranchers help missionaries through Steer in one of two primary ways. A few farmers raise young calves, called feeders, to a heavier weight and then sell the fattened calf. However, most farmers, like Tabor, participate in Steer's cow/calf program, in which they keep an adult cow and sell the weaned calves each year. In either case, Steer makes the initial investment by buying the animal and providing insurance in case the cow has medical needs or dies. The farmer's role is to provide food, water and routine care until the cow is ready to be sold. Once that

happens, the farmer returns the proceeds from the sale back to Steer.

Keith Kost, executive director and CEO of Steer, said the organization has been helping missionaries through local farm/ranch partnerships for more than 50 years. He said the Steer model provides a different kind of missions opportunity for farmers, who often have a lot of money invested in land and equipment but not a lot of cash on hand.

"If you have a pasture, you can run a cow,"

Kost said. "And the money from that cow or calf then goes to missionaries to help support what God has called them to do."

Josh Sparkman, pastor of No Fences Cowboy Church, Falkville, currently has two cows for Steer, both of which he expects to deliver calves any day.

(See 'Steer,' page 11)



Photo courtesy of David Parks

Buttercup (left) the calf trails behind her mom, Daffodil.

COMMENT

Enhancements or Hindrances to Faith

At its core, Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our faith is anchored in God's love for humanity expressed through Jesus whom the Bible describes as the "Word (of God) made flesh" (John 1:14). Through the faithful death and resurrection of Jesus, God offers to all who accept and believe in His loving act, forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.

Christianity is about a believer's response to God's gracious invitation as one cultivates a closer walk with God through a personal relationship made possible by the work of Jesus.

Over the centuries, Christian believers developed cultures around their faith. Structures formed. Patterns of belief emerged. Expectations of adherents grew. Unfortunately, things designed to encourage and enhance one's personal relationship with God sometimes became hindrances to it, even substitutes for it.

Jesus declared, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Today the expression of the church Jesus promised takes many forms. Some Christian faith groups (churches) claim to be the "only" church. If one is not a part of that group, one is either deficient as a believer or outside God's church altogether.

Some church groups teach that identity with their church is the key issue of life. Jesus died for the church, such groups teach, not for individuals. The invitation of such groups is "join our church" rather than announcing God's offer of a personal relationship with Him through faith in Jesus.

Where that takes place, a relationship with the church becomes a substitute for a relationship with God.

God's invitation to a personal relationship does not imply that He invites believers to a relationship of equals. God is always God. He is always the Creator; we are the creation. He is the Sustainer; we are the sustained. He is the Forgiver; we are the forgiven. He is the Invitation; we are the response. He is the Authority; we are the obedient.

Jesus promised He would send the Holy Spirit who would "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

The believer is to live under the authority of God as the Holy Spirit guides one into understanding all truth. Unfortunately, God's authority is often confused with ecclesiastical authority.

Some churches advocate obedience to a church office holder. The words of that person are sometimes equated with the words of God. To disagree with that office holder is to disagree with God. The office holder announces what to believe and what individuals are to do as well as what the church as a whole is to do.

Stepping stones

When that happens, ecclesiastical structures designed to be stepping stones toward God become nothing more than stumbling blocks as obedience to an office holder is substituted for obedience to God as made known by the Holy Spirit.

For some, their first love is the style, form and traditions of worship. This may be expressed in commitment to pageantry, ritual and beauty of historical liturgies. It can also be expressed in a commitment to a particular style of music or feeling like one has "not been to church" unless the pastor preaches with a particular style of delivery.

In either case the emphasis has switched to the way commitment to God is expressed rather than the unseen presence in worship of the true and living God. When that happens, what is supposed to encourage and enhance a relationship with God becomes a hindrance to that relationship.

Even the work of the church can become a

substitute for a relationship with the Lord of the church. Jesus taught compassion for the poor, the hungry and the needy and the church has a marvelous history of demonstrating God's love to hurting humanity.

Unfortunately, there have been chapters of church history when believers became more committed to feeding the hungry and caring for the sick than to a relationship with the living God. For some the emotional fulfillment of direct services ministry was so overwhelming that direct ministry was done for the sake of direct ministry.

For others, pouring one's self into direct services ministry has been a way to earn God's love. For these, direct ministry became a way to earn God's favor rather than accepting the free gift of relationship offered through Jesus Christ.

At their best, direct service ministries grow out of a personal relationship with God and an understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the expression of God's love to humankind in all situations and in all times. His example compels believers to be expressions of God's love for others.

Over the centuries systems of theology and Christian thought emerged. Scholars and academics debated the fine points of these competing ways of understanding God and His teachings. Sometimes these debates went beyond recognizing differences to actual divisions. Sometimes adherents became more concerned with ensuring victory for their way of thinking, their understanding of Scripture, their system of theology than with a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

That temptation continues today as Christian groups across the world define each other in and out of the Kingdom of God based on agreement with a particular biblical interpretation and as Christians strive more for victory for a certain theological system rather than a personal relationship with God.

It was Charles Gore, Anglican Bishop of Oxford, who said a century ago, "Nothing, I suppose, can keep the Christianity of a theoretical student from deteriorating save the constant exercise of prayer which is the address of person to person."

Without an emphasis on a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, even Christian theology can become a substitute for knowing God.

Again to quote Gore, "The fruitfulness of life varies with the extent to which Jesus, the historical person, the ever-living person, is recognized as the object of our devotion and the Lord of our life." Amen.

The apostle Paul declared, "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). For those of us who have a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, my prayer is that whether living or dead, we will "be with Christ which is far better."

Memorial Day is Monday, May 28

Remembering those who served our nation and paid for our freedom



"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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Collective sigh of relief

Missions positions abandoned by NAMB 'saved' by State Board

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist directors of missions (DOM) are now breathing a sigh of relief following a few months of anxiety after last fall's announcement that much, if not all, of their North American Mission Board (NAMB) funding was being eliminated. This topic, as well as the announcement of a new prayer initiative and the election of a new Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) office director, was part of the agenda for the May 18 SBOM meeting in Montgomery.

Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of the SBOM, announced a commitment by the SBOM to assume responsibility for the associational missions funding being eliminated by NAMB over the next five years. This funding currently impacts 45 missions positions across the state, which amounts to a little more than \$300,000. Other funding for these positions comes from churches, associations and the SBOM, DuBois said. The ministry personnel in these positions will remain employees of their respective associations or churches.

SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance said following the meeting that the details of how to finance this new commitment are still being worked out, but he did not want to leave the DOMs uncertain about their ministries in light of the NAMB action.

DuBois told SBOM board members, "One of the significant partnerships we have in Alabama is with directors of missions, associations and churches. We've been working over the last 18 months with ... the DOMs to arrive at a template to address funding issues once NAMB implements the changes underway."

"Those 45 missions positions will continue regardless of what NAMB does," he explained. "We are going to continue doing missions in Alabama. Forty-two state conventions are charged with the responsibility of giving financial support to Southern Baptist missions and ministries, but only one state convention is charged to reach Alabama and that's our state."

"We are working to not allow any of the positions to go unfunded," DuBois said. "Bottom line: We are going to do missions in Alabama."

Lance also unveiled a new prayer initiative for March and April 2013 — Praying Across Alabama.

"This is a prayer for spiritual awakening based on 2 Chron. 7:14," Lance said, noting the SBOM is coordinating this emphasis through DOMs, SBOM trustees, local pastors and local Woman's Missionary Union leaders.

The plan is for Lance, DuBois, Dale Huff, Sammy Gilbreath, Reggie Quimby and Mike Jackson, all of the SBOM, to spread out across the state and gather with local Christians to pray on the steps of the 72 courthouses in Alabama's 67 counties.

"This is more than symbolic," Lance said. "We are hoping it to be a significant call to prayer." While the final details are still being worked out, Lance encourages Alabama Baptists to take this time of prayer seriously.

**"Bottom line: We are
going to do missions
in Alabama."**

**Associate Executive Director
Bobby DuBois
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions**



Photo by Doug Rogers

'WE NEED PRAYER' — SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance unveils a new prayer initiative coming in 2013 to the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions on May 18.

"As we look toward helping Alabama Baptists refocus and renew a commitment to the Great Commission and Great Commission Ministries, nothing will be accomplished without desperate praying," he said. "We need prayer now more than ever."

This prayer initiative will be the overarching emphasis for the three major emphases being developed by the Great Commission Task Force "as we look toward the future," Lance noted. The task force was established in November 2010 to determine how Alabama Baptists would respond to the national Southern Baptist Convention's Great Commission Resurgence priorities approved in June 2010.

The emphases are:
1. *Missions mobilization and disaster relief*

"This is not new to us, but we are doing it in a new way," Lance said. "The driving force will be by affinity relationships."

The new effort, known as Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections, will connect national and international missionaries who have ties to Alabama with Alabama Baptist churches.

"This will be a network with churches and ... [all of us working together about] how best to meet the needs in the areas where the missionaries serve and impact lostness in these particular areas," he said. "This is not the same as the unengaged people groups effort happening with the International Mission Board, but some of those relationships will be in those areas."

As far as disaster relief, "we are trying our best to not only have trained credentialed volunteers but also know how to best [process and work with] untrained volunteers."

2. *Church planting/church revitalization*

"Church planting is tough but specific — church planting is trying to start a church — but church revitalization is much more complex," Lance said.

With the number of church plants going

down nationwide, Alabama Baptists will be encouraged to take a 1 percent-plus challenge with new church starts, he said, noting that is a goal of 32-plus churches every year.

As far as church revitalization, the SBOM wants to walk alongside churches that assess they need help, Lance said, noting about 70 percent of churches nationwide are plateaued.

3. *Cooperative Program promotion and stewardship development*

Promotional efforts are being developed to help strengthen giving among Alabama Baptists, Lance said, noting an initial two-tenths challenge. "We are saying that increasing giving just two-tenths of 1 percent annually would be \$1 million a year (in increased giving through the CP)," he said.

Also during the SBOM meeting, board members elected Rick Barnhart as director-elect of the SBOM's office of associational missions and church planting.

The current director, Gary Swafford, plans to retire in early 2013, and "his is one of those critical positions that ... covers a lot of cooperative efforts across the landscape of Alabama," Lance said. "The reason we are doing a director-elect position is because of the wealth of information and responsibilities wrapped up in that position. ... We need to have someone come alongside Gary Swafford for five or six months."

Barnhart, DOM for Baldwin Baptist Association, starts Aug. 1

"I don't know why God is doing this because I'm having the best time of my life as associational missionary in Baldwin County, but I look forward to serving at the State Board in the same way I've served in Baldwin County," Barnhart said.

SBOM board members also approved the annual audit and heard from the various entities and auxiliaries.

In related news, the new Disaster Relief Offering has brought in more than \$166,000 so far. The new annual offering was launched April 22 with a goal \$200,000 for 2012.

The monies for this offering will be used for general disaster relief needs and immediate response efforts needed once a disaster happens, Lance said.

Across Alabama's Associations



BESSEMER

► The Southcrest Gospel Singing ministry of **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host Royal Masters Quartet and SonRise Christian Vocal Band June 1, 7:30 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHEL

► **Friendship Church, Thomasville**, will hold dedication services for its new church building June 3, 11 a.m. Former pastors will be in attendance. A covered-dish lunch will be served following the dedication. John Averitt is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Stan Lewis** resigned as pastor of **First Church, Birmingham**, to become executive pastor of Olive Church, Pensacola, Fla. His last day at First, Birmingham, will be June 3.

COFFEE

► **Macedonia Church, Enterprise**, will host a steak dinner and "Men of Honor" simulcast June 15. Dinner will start at 5 p.m. and the simulcast will be 6-8 p.m. For reservations call 334-347-7364 by June 7. Lane Harris is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Billy Joe Rich** is the new music minister for **Memphis Church, Dothan**. Rich is a graduate of Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and has served at several churches in Florida and Alabama. Rich has three children and five grandchildren.



RICH

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold family night June 7, 6:30-8 p.m., with food, fun and games. For information call 256-729-1328. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, will kick off Vacation Bible School (VBS) with Kids Day June 2, 2-4 p.m. There will be games, blowups, food and fun for the entire family. VBS family night will be June 10, 5 p.m. There will be

homemade ice cream. For information call 256-420-8172, email mhbc@ardmore.net or visit www.mablehillbaptist.org. Mike Clark is pastor. ► **Murphy Hill Church, Toney**, will celebrate homecoming June 10, 10:30 a.m. Guest speaker will be Michael King with gospel singing by Unity Quartet. For information call 256-828-3171. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Orchard Church, Mobile**, will celebrate homecoming June 3. There will be special music and covered-dish dinners with barbecue ribs and chicken. George Riek is pastor.

SELMA

► **Westwood Church, Selma**, will host Awaiting in concert June 3, 6:30 p.m. Edward Eaton is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Cook Springs Church, Pell City**, will celebrate homecoming June 3 with worship and special music at 10 a.m. and a fellowship meal at noon. Mike Dowling is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Big Sandy Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold a VBS kick-off party June 3, 3 p.m. For information call 205-752-1284. Tim Fields is pastor. ► **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host Biker Sunday June 3 with breakfast at 9:30 a.m., worship service at 10:30 a.m. and lunch at noon. Guest speaker will be J. Marcus Merritt. At 6 p.m., Don Piper, author of "90 Minutes in Heaven" and "Heaven Is Real," will be the special guest. Herb Thomas is pastor. ► **Lakewood Church, Northport**, will host special guest Don Piper June 3, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Scott McQueen is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Millry**, will celebrate homecoming June 3, 11 a.m. Lunch and singing will follow. Ron Pierce is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Sardis #2 Church, Addison**, will host a youth conference June 1-2. June 1 will be at 6 p.m. with Kyle Woodard and Paul Cleg-horn. June 2 will be at 11 a.m. with Adam Veal and Benjamin Smothers. Lunch will be served. For information call 205-272-9912. Mackie Watts is pastor.

Award-winning

For the 16th straight year, *The Alabama Baptist* has been named among the top regional Christian newspapers in the nation. Below are a list of awards won by the paper and other state Baptist entities based on work published in 2011.

The Alabama Baptist

- **Overall newspaper** — Best in class — award of merit (ACP), Award of excellence (RCC), Award of excellence (EPA), honorable mention (BCA)
- **May 5 single issue** — Award of excellence (RCC)
- **Alabama tornado complete package coverage (print, online, web, social media, videos)** — first place and grand prize with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (BCA)
- **Alabama tornado coverage** — Award of excellence (ACP), first place (BCA)
- **"Churches Caught in a Dilemma"** editorial by Bob Terry — first place (BCA), third place (EPA)
- **"God Takes All Our 'Yuck'"** editorial by Bob Terry — honorable mention (BCA)
- **"We Do Not Lose Heart"** Rashional Thoughts by Jennifer Davis Rash — Award of excellence (RCC)
- **May 12 front-page graphic** by Lauren C. Grim — honorable mention (ACP)
- **"Lecha Woman"** photo by Neisha Fuson — honorable mention (BCA)
- **India photo series** by Neisha Fuson — second place (BCA)

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

- **Alabama tornado complete package coverage (print, online, web, social media, videos)** — first place and grand prize with *The Alabama Baptist* (BCA)
- **Facebook page** by Chris Mills — second place (BCA)
- **"Will You Be the One?"** video promotion by Bethany Rogers, first place (BCA)
- **"Tornado Relief Update"** video editorial by Doug Rogers, second place (BCA)
- **"A Chaplain's Impact"** video editorial by Doug Rogers and Bethany Rogers — second place (BCA)
- **"The Wind Has Blown"** music video by Doug Rogers — first place (BCA)
- **"Compassion"** promotion photo by Doug Rogers — first place (BCA)

University of Mobile

- **Leadership Banquet** special event — silver award (HEMR), honorable mention (BCA)
- **Project Serve** special event — honorable mention (BCA)
- **"Brian Hedrick: A Life Unlimited"** by Kathy Dean — first place and grand prize (BCA)
- **"Rekindle Your Heart"** by Kathy Dean — second place (BCA)
- **"Missions"** brochure design by Jay Adcock, Lesa Moore and Amy Wright — second place (BCA)
- **"University of Mobile Magazine"** Spring 2011 design by Jay Adcock, Lesa Moore and Kathy Dean — merit award (HEMR), honorable mention (BCA)
- **www.umobile.edu** website — merit award (HEMR)

Samford University

- **"The Samford Chronicle"** promotional/informational video — Award of merit (RCC)

Associated Church Press (ACP)
Baptist Communicators Association (BCA)
Evangelical Press Association (EPA)
Religion Communicators Council (RCC)
Higher Education Marketing Report (HEMR)



God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.

Hebrews 6:10



Designed by Lauren C. Grim

SBC Preview

Radical reprioritization of Christ's Great Commission

Southern Baptists to gather in New Orleans for annual meeting June 19–20

Jesus: to the Neighborhood and the Nations” is the theme for the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) June 19–20 annual meeting in New Orleans, SBC President Bryant Wright has announced.

Drawn from Luke 24:47–48, the theme is worded to convey the importance of dual missions at home and abroad, Wright said.

“Sometimes people feel like it’s either/or, that they must focus on those at home to the neglect of those in the uttermost parts,” Wright said. “Sometimes people are so focused on the uttermost part that they neglect their own neighborhood, their own missions field.

“[S]ome people think unless they are reaching their neigh-

borhood first, they don’t have the right to focus on going to the nations,” Wright continued, noting: “This is a specifically worded theme. Christ is clear. We are to focus on both. It is not either/or. It is both/and.

“They ought to be our focus all the time.”

A radical reprioritization of Christ’s Great Commission is Wright’s prayer for the missions focus of the annual meeting, to be held at New Orleans’ Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. “I’m praying this will be Spirit-led,” Wright said, that there will be “a powerful conviction of the Holy Spirit as we focus on carrying out Christ’s Great Commission in a unified spirit.”

Wright chose the passage from the book of Luke to expound on the disciple Luke’s frequently quoted rendering of

the Great Commission in Acts 1:8. “That’s the beauty of the Gospels, to look at parallel teachings in different Gospels. It gives us a sense of freshness, an understanding of what Jesus is teaching us. Lord willing, I intend to preach on this expression of the Great Commission in my convention sermon,” Wright said, referring to the president’s address on Tuesday during the convention.

“I think it just allows us to expound more on the very crisp, clear mission Jesus gives us in Acts 1:8.”

Wright, pastor of the Atlanta-area Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., will conclude his second one-year term as SBC president during the New Orleans annual meeting. (BP)



Photo courtesy of the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans

2012 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting program

Tuesday morning, June 19

- 8:00 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham, Convention music director, worship pastor, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., and combined choirs and orchestra, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga.; First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.; First Baptist Church, Kenner, La.; First Baptist Church, New Orleans, La.; Williams Boulevard Baptist Church, Kenner, La.; Centreville Baptist Church, Centreville, Ala.
- 8:10 Call to Order — Bryant Wright, president, Southern Baptist Convention; senior pastor, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga.
Registration Report and Constitution of the Convention — James H. (Jim) Wells, SBC registration secretary; director of missions, Tri County Baptist Association, Nixa, Mo.
- 8:15 Prayer — Captain Endel Lee, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy; NAMB National Missionary for Chaplain Crisis Response
- 8:20 Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
- 8:25 Committee on Order of Business (First Report) — Stan Buckley, chair; executive director, But God Ministries, Jackson, Miss.
- 8:25 Welcome — Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley Jr., president, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.
- 8:30 Announcement of Committee on Committees, Credentials, Resolutions, and Tellers — Bryant Wright
- 8:35 Introduction of Motions — Bryant Wright
- 9:00 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 9:05 Local Arrangements Committee Presentation — William E. (Bill) Townes, vice president for Convention Finance, SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn.
- 9:10 Crossover Evangelism Report — Kevin Ezell, president, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, Ga.

- 9:15 Woman’s Missionary Union Report — Wanda S. Lee, executive director, Birmingham, Ala.
- 9:25 Executive Committee Report (Part 1) — Frank S. Page, president, Nashville, Tenn.
- 10:25 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 10:30 LifeWay Christian Resources Report — Thom S. Rainer, president, Nashville, Tenn.
- 10:40 LifeWay Christian Resources Presentation — Thom S. Rainer
- 11:00 Traditional Worship — Mark Cottingham
- 11:15 SBC President’s Address — Bryant Wright
- 11:55 Benediction — John Barnes, pastor, Oak Grove Baptist Church, Mize, Miss.

Tuesday afternoon, June 19

- 1:30 Concert of Praise — Combined choirs and orchestras
- 1:40 Prayer — Ron Lentine, pastor, Myrtle Grove Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla.
- 1:45 SBC Historical Library and Archives Report — Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley Jr., chairman, council of seminary presidents; president, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.
- 1:50 Business, Committee on Order of Business (Second Report) — Stan Buckley
- 2:05 Referrals/Introduction of Motions
- 2:05 Executive Committee Report (Part 2) — Frank S. Page
- 2:35 Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Jeff Iorg, president, Mill Valley, Calif.
- 2:50 Election of Officers (First)
- 3:00 Committee on Nominations Report — Waylon Bailey, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Covington, La.
- 3:10 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 3:15 The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission Report — Richard D. Land, president, Nashville, Tenn.
- 3:30 The Ethics & Religious Liberty

- Commission Presentation — Richard D. Land
- 3:50 Executive Committee Report (Part 3), SBC Name Change — Frank S. Page
- 4:20 Election of Officers (Second)
- 4:30 Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Paige Patterson, president, Fort Worth, Texas
- 4:45 Introduction of New Motions (Last Opportunity) — Bryant Wright
- 4:55 International Mission Board Report — Tom Elliff, president, Richmond, Va.
- 5:05 International Mission Board Presentation — Tom Elliff
- 5:55 Benediction — Bruce Chesser, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tenn.

Wednesday morning, June 20

- 8:00 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 8:10 Prayer — Frankie Clark, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Taylorsville, Miss.
- 8:15 Business, Committee on Order of Business (Third Report) — Stan Buckley
- 8:35 Election of Officers (Third)
- 8:45 Committee on Committees Report — Buddy Champion, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Trussville, Ala.
- 8:55 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 9:05 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Robin D. Hadaway, interim president, Kansas City, Mo.
- 9:20 New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley Jr., president, New Orleans, La.
- 9:35 Previously Scheduled Business — Bryant Wright
- 9:55 Committee on Resolutions (First Report) — Jimmy Scroggins, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla.
- 10:25 Election of Officers (Fourth)
- 10:35 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 10:40 GuideStone Financial Resources Report — O. S. Hawkins, president, Dallas, Texas

- 10:55 Previously Scheduled Business — Bryant Wright
- 11:15 Election of Officers (Fifth)
- 11:25 Contemporary Worship — Bobby Smith, John McCullough and the Johnson Ferry Baptist Church worship band
- 11:40 Convention Message — David Uth, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla.
- 12:15 Benediction — Mark Vincent, pastor, Clarke-Venable Baptist Church, Decatur, Miss.

Wednesday afternoon, June 20

- 3:00 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 3:05 Prayer — Gil McKee, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, Ala.
- 3:10 Presentation of Outgoing Officers — Frank S. Page
- 3:15 Presentation of New Officers — Frank S. Page
- 3:20 Business, Committee on Order of Business (Fourth Report) — Stan Buckley
- 3:30 Election of 2013 Convention Sermon Preacher, Alternate Preacher, and Music Director
- 3:30 Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — Daniel L. (Danny) Akin, president, Wake Forest, N.C.
- 3:45 Recognition of Past SBC Presidents — Bryant Wright
- 3:50 Previously Scheduled Business — Bryant Wright
- 4:05 Committee on Resolutions (Final Report) — Jimmy Scroggins
- 4:30 The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Report — R. Albert (Al) Mohler Jr., president, Louisville, Ky.
- 4:45 Worship through Music — Mark Cottingham
- 4:55 North American Mission Board Report — Kevin Ezell
- 5:05 North American Mission Board Presentation — Kevin Ezell
- 5:55 Benediction — Eddie Wren, pastor, First Baptist Church, Rayville, La. (BP)

Momentous meeting

New 'descriptor,' historic election slated for 2012 SBC annual meeting

The recommendation of "Great Commission Baptists" as a descriptive name and the prospective election of its first African-American president are on the horizon for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) June 19–20 meeting in New Orleans.

Messengers will decide whether to adopt the informal, nonlegal "Great Commission Baptists" descriptor as recommended by the SBC Executive Committee, embracing the suggestion of a special task force appointed to study changing the SBC's name, deemed by some a regional barrier to the gospel.

"The overwhelming acceptance of the Executive Committee was the first major step," SBC President Bryant Wright said of the proposed descriptor. "Obviously, the decision of the convention will be most important. If approved, our entities will lead the way in using the descriptor. I think it will be a 10- to 20-year process of helping Southern Baptists and the general public to think, 'those people really are Great Commission Baptists,' when they think of us."

Fred Luter Jr., senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, and present SBC first vice president, currently is unopposed for the SBC presidency. Luter would be the first African-American to hold the post, on the heels of the SBC's historic 2011 measure calling for greater accountability among its entities regarding ethnic diversity in leadership. David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans, is expected to nominate Luter.

"Our election of Fred Luter as the first African-American president of the SBC will send a great, hopeful, powerful message to our city, our culture, our convention and our country," Crosby said. "For many, it will make them rethink who Southern Baptists are, and it will help us reach the new diversity that we find in our cities. It is a statement that people of all ethnic groups make up the Southern Baptist Convention and are honored."

The annual meeting will be held at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, the 2005 source of troubling images as thousands suffered hunger, thirst and lack of medical care as victims of Hurricane Katrina. The center has undergone \$92.7 million in improvements since the storm, according to press reports.

Annual meeting theme

"Jesus: to the Neighborhood and the Nations" is the annual meeting theme (see story, page 5), drawn from Luke 24:47–48 and worded to convey the importance of dual missions at home and abroad, Wright said.

"Last year in Phoenix, God moved so powerfully it seemed more like a missions conference than a denominational business meeting," Wright said. "It is my hope that with 'Jesus: to the Neighborhood and the Nations,' we will once again see God's Spirit convicting us and motivating us to fulfill Christ's Great Commission."

Wright said his prayer is that messengers will have a "loving and caring Christian witness" at the annual meeting, "that the spirit of our messengers will be Christ-

like to all we come in contact with."

Concluding his final term as SBC president, Wright described his tenure as faith-enriching, energizing and exhausting, referencing the godly passion of young seminarians, the church-planting efforts of the North American Mission Board, frequent travel and communication opportunities, among other experiences.

"It has been energizing to see how God is leading us to embrace the unengaged and unreached people groups of the world," Wright said. "It has been energizing to preach the gospel in so many settings, from small country churches to mega-churches in our great cities, and from churches in Egypt to students at Harvard."

"Two years is plenty," he said of his tenure. "Although by the time you have some idea of the vast scope of Southern Baptist ministries around the world you're going out of office."

Hundreds of volunteers will participate in Crossover New Orleans missions outreach projects June 15–16, including church planting, evangelistic block parties, health screenings, prayer walks and servant evangelism.

New Orleans Baptists plan to launch four new churches in the city this year, two of them during the annual meet-

ing, said Jack Hunter, executive director of the New Orleans Baptist Association.

"Our churches are becoming well-trained in evangelism and will lead the way in reaching our communities through Crossover events,"

Hunter said. "Our leaders want to create a culture of evangelism in the association, and Crossover, followed closely by other outreach events in succeeding weeks, will help do that."

Southern Baptists have ministered extensively in New Orleans since 2005's Hurricane Katrina, helping to rebuild the city.

"Southern Baptists were here with us when we were recovering and mourning with us when we were getting back on our feet," Hunter said. "And Southern Baptist work is still going as New Orleans is reborn."

To learn more about Crossover New Orleans and to volunteer, visit joinnoba.com/crossover.

Churches and volunteers interested in partnering long-term with a New Orleans church plant may participate in City Uprising on June 13–16. Crossover is partnering with the ministry, which is based in Baltimore, to coordinate missions opportunities in New Orleans for volunteers of all ages. Register at www.cityuprising.com.

The Cooperative Program (CP) booth in the SBC exhibit hall will enjoy increased visibility, positioned next to the booths of the International and North American mission boards. The CP booth will feature two large high-definition video screens displaying live video interviews, panel discussions and live Twitter feeds. Similar positioning of the CP booth at the 2011 annual meeting attracted a wide array of SBC leaders and emphasized the benefits of

Southern Baptists' channel of support for state, national and international missions and ministries.

► Southern Baptist pastors will focus on changing their communities and the world at the 2012 Pastors Conference, June 17–18 at the convention center. "Changing: Lives, Communities and the World" is the theme, with sessions scheduled June 17 at 5:30 p.m. and June 18 at 8:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Speakers will include David Jeremiah, David Platt, Fred Luter Jr., Johnny Hunt and Jack Graham. Honoring Father's Day, pastors will spotlight the father-son teams of Bailey and Josh Smith, Ronnie and Nick Floyd, Don and Rob Wilton and Tony and Anthony Evans.

► Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) will hold its

missions celebration in the convention center's La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom, 3–7 p.m. June 17 and continuing through June 18, beginning at 9 a.m. Speakers will include Wanda Lee, WMU national executive director; David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans; Jay and Kathy Shafto, Southern Baptist international representatives; Damian Emetuche and Stacy Smith, North American Mission Board field personnel, and Debby Akerman, national WMU president. Participants are encouraged to bring donations to area ministries, including hygiene kits, snack packs and gift cards.

► NFL quarterback Tim Tebow's mother, Pam Tebow, will address the 2012 Pastors



WRIGHT



LUTER



In addition to jazz, beignets and the French Quarter, there's an added reason Southern Baptists may enjoy visiting New Orleans for Crossover 2012 — the love they may sense from Crescent City residents. Southern Baptists have poured heart, soul and sweat into the Crescent City since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Hundreds of volunteers — from Louisiana and across the nation — will join together for the June 15–16 evangelistic outreach prior to the SBC annual meeting.

Wives Conference, scheduled from 8:30–11:45 a.m. June 18, in the convention center's Hall B-1. After ESPN aired the portion of an interview with Pam Tebow that focused on her refusal to abort "Timmy" when she was advised to do so, she has gained a national platform for the pro-life message. Attendees will also hear a testimony from Jeannie Elliff, wife of International Mission Board President Tom Elliff, and a roundtable discussion about parenting children of ministers. Women who serve in any facet of local church leadership, missions and denominational work are invited to attend the free event. Registration is not required.

► The Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions will emphasize passion in ministry June 17–18 in Leavell Chapel at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 3939 Old Gentilly Blvd. Fred Luter and Richard Blackaby will be among the speakers. General meetings are scheduled 9 a.m.–5 p.m. June 17 and 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m. June 18, with breakout sessions 1:30–4:30 p.m.

To register for the SBC online, go to www.sbcannualmeeting.net under the Messengers tab.

After online registration, each messenger will receive an eight-digit registration code to present at the annual meeting's Express registration lane. There, the registration code can be entered into a computer and a nametag will be printed.

The traditional registration method also is available.

Messengers wishing to propose resolutions must submit them at least 15 days prior to the annual meeting. Detailed guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at www.sbcannualmeeting.net under the Messengers tab.

Resolutions may be submitted online but must be followed up by a letter of credentials from the submitter's church.

Shuttle service will be available Sunday through Wednesday to and from the convention center from select hotels noted at www.sbcannualmeeting.net, under the Housing and Travel tab. Shuttle passes are available online for purchase with service provided 3–10 p.m. June 17; 7 a.m.–10 p.m. June 18; and 7 a.m.–7 p.m. June 19–20.

Shuttle service to and from the airport to hotels also is available. Tickets must be purchased online at least 24 hours in advance of flight arrivals.

Children and students

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief child-care volunteers from Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee will offer child care for newborns through age 5 during the SBC Pastors Conference and the annual meeting.

Preschool childcare and activities for grades 1–6 will be housed at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, the annual meeting site. Students in grades 7–12 will meet at the convention center before going into the community with Baptist Friendship House for hands-on missions work. Students will return to the convention center prior to the close of the afternoon session each day. Children in Action and Youth on Mission will be offered June 19–20.

"To the Finish Line" is the theme for Children in Action, designed to challenge children entering grades 1–6 to live Christ-centered lives, said Cindy Bradley, Michigan WMU executive director and children's camp coordinator.

"Bible studies will encourage attendees to choose to follow Christ, train spiritually, move past obstacles to faith and win a heavenly prize," Bradley said. "In addition to Bible studies, children will ... participate in worship sessions, games and recreation and crafts and mission projects."

Registration is handled online at www.sbcannualmeeting.net. (BP)

WMU participants to share ideas, hear stories

With the theme "The Story Lives On," Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) will hold its Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting on June 17–18 in New Orleans.

Missionary testimonies, music led by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary staff and students and theme interpretations by Aaron House and Piercing Word Ministry will highlight the WMU sessions.

"Sharing ideas, learning new ways to be involved in missions and hearing stories of how God is at work through missions efforts around the world are all a part of these two days in New Orleans," said Wanda Lee, WMU national executive director. "Join us to experience it all and find renewal for you and your church in helping equip future missions leaders."

Featured speakers will include Lee, author of the 2012 WMU emphasis book, "The Story Lives On: God's Power Throughout Generations;" David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans; Jay and Kathy Shafto, International Mission Board field personnel; Damian Emetuche and Stacey Smith, North American Mission Board field personnel; and Debby Akerman, national WMU president.

WMU will meet in the La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center from 3–7 p.m. on June 17 and all day June 18 beginning at 9 a.m. The Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting follows June 19–20, also at the convention center.

Breakout sessions will be offered both days on a variety of topics, including WMU's Project HELP: Human Exploitation, which addresses the human exploitation issues of bullying, human trafficking, the media's exploitation of children and families, pornography and the exploitation of natural resources for personal gain. Other sessions will include WorldCrafts, which develops sustainable fair-trade business for impoverished populations; using social media in missions; and leading missions experiences in the church for all ages.

"Leaders who are anticipating what's coming in September for Royal Ambassa-

WMU annual meeting schedule

Opening session

Sunday, June 17, 3–3:45 p.m.

Breakout sessions

4–5 p.m.

General session

7–8:30 p.m.

The Story Lives On
Through Scripture — Aaron House,
Piercing Word Ministry
Through Chronological Bible
Storying — Annette Hall, IMB
Through WMU — Acteens® Panelists
The Story of God at Work in New
Orleans — David Crosby of FBC New
Orleans

General session

Monday, June 18, 9–10:30 a.m.

The Story Lives On
Through Scripture — Aaron House
Through Prison 2 Purpose — Stacey
Smith, NAMB
Through Prison Ministry in

Angola — Chuck Kelley of New Orleans Seminary

Breakout sessions

11 a.m.–12 p.m.

General session

2–3 p.m.

The Story Lives On
Through WMU Around the World —
Debby Akerman, national WMU
Through Missions in Burkina Faso —
Jay and Kathy Shafto, IMB

3–4 p.m.

Meet missionaries and program guests

Breakout sessions

4–5 p.m.

General session

7–8:30 p.m.

The Story Lives On
Through Scripture — Aaron House
Through Church Planting — Damian
Emetuche, NAMB
Through Work of WMU — Acteens®

dors and Challengers will especially be interested in attending conferences about leading boys in missions," Lee said. "We have been working hard all year on these new resources as we incorporate boys back into our missions programming. These are exciting days as we see God answering our prayers for a coordinated missions focus across all age levels in our churches."

Training session

Also, Southern Baptist international representatives will lead a two-hour training session on Chronological Bible Storying and how to use this approach on missions trips and in sharing the Scriptures with those who cannot read.

Participants are encouraged to bring items to donate and sort for area ministries, such as

items for hygiene kits for Global Maritime Ministries which ministers to seafarers and port workers; snack pack items for Baptist Friendship House, a ministry offering transitional housing for women with children, various programs and classes, and outreach to the homeless; and items for Inward Ministry, an outreach to women working in the sex industry on Bourbon Street.

In addition, gifts cards could readily be used by all of these ministries. Check wmu.com for a detailed list of needed items.

WMU's Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting is free; preregistration is not required. Onsite registration opens at 2 p.m. June 17. For more information and updates, visit www.wmu.com. (BP)

Exhibit hall to focus on SBC's 'voice' for CP

The Cooperative Program (CP) will be a key focal point in the exhibit hall at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in New Orleans.

The beauty of the CP lies not in the amount of money each church is able to give, but in the voice it provides every believer in SBC missions and ministry, said Ashley Clayton, associate to the SBC Executive Committee president for the CP and stewardship.

"Every gift is an investment in ministries and missions," Clayton said. "What we try to communicate in the exhibit hall is that every Southern Baptist has a voice about the Cooperative Program. We're all vested in missions and ministries."

The 1,500-square-foot CP booth will be positioned next to the International and North American mission board areas, and will highlight the CP's integral support of CP entities, state missions, theological education and evangelism.

"These are things that Southern Bap-

tists know and love," Clayton said, "and they fuel that through the Cooperative Program. We believe it's in the heart of every Southern Baptist to be generous and to be on mission."

The CP booth will feature a platform stage area and two large high-definition video screens displaying live interviews, panel discussions and Twitter feeds.

Attendees are encouraged to visit the booth as early as 9 a.m. Monday, June 18, to hear interviews featuring pastors, church planters, missionaries, professors and key SBC leaders

through Wednesday afternoon, June 20.

View interview schedules in the daily bulletins and on the new SBC Annual Meeting smartphone app for iPhone, iPad, Android and Blackberry users, available for download at <http://m.core-apps.com/sbc2012am> from a smartphone or by typing in "SBC Annual Meeting 2012" in the smartphone's app store.

SBC entities and Woman's Missionary Union also will have exhibit hall space at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

(BP)

For more information about the 2012
Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting
or related events in New Orleans, visit
www.sbcannualmeeting.net.

Alabama Baptists to serve at SBC annual meeting

Alabama Baptists will be among those serving during the June 19-20 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in New Orleans.

► Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, will serve as chairman of the Committee on Committees.

► Timothy Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, will serve as a member of the Committee on Committees.

The Committee on Committees will assemble in New Orleans just prior to the SBC annual meeting to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations who, in turn, nominate trustees to serve on boards of the various entities of the SBC. SBC Bylaw 19 also provides that the Committee on Committees "shall nominate all special committees authorized during the sessions of the Convention not otherwise provided for."

The Committee on Committees has 70 members, two from each of the 35 state or regional conventions qualified for representation on boards of SBC entities.

Credentials Committee

► Alabamians Raymond Jones, pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan, and Paul Murphy, pastor of First Baptist Church, Arab, will serve on the Credentials Committee.

The Credentials Committee functions during the registration timeframe of the SBC annual meeting and works with participants at-

tempting to register without all the proper credentials in place.

SBC President Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., named the members of these two committees as well as the members of the Resolutions and Tellers committees.

Being nominated

Alabama Baptists also are among those nominated by the 2012 SBC Committee on Nominations to serve on the trustee boards of the Executive Committee, International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources, The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and the six seminaries as well as on the Committee on Order of Business.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting. Those nominated from Alabama are:

► James W. (Jim) Averett, layperson and member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, replacing Mitchell E. Gavin, Alexander City, to serve on the Executive Committee with term to expire in 2016.

► Kenneth J. Burnham, layperson and member of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, replacing Robert E. Jackson, Decatur, who declined to serve a second term on the trustee board of IMB with term to expire in 2016.

► Richard L. Richie, pastor of Flint Baptist Church, Decatur, to

serve a second term on the trustee board of the IMB.

► Charles C. (Craig) Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, to serve a second term on the trustee board of

LifeWay Christian Resources.

► Michael E. (Mike) Shaw, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, replacing Bud Young, Mobile, on the board of New Orleans Seminary with term to expire in 2017.

► Ben O. Character, layperson and member of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, replacing Robert E. (Bob) Ball, Muncie, Ind., on the board of Midwestern Seminary with term to expire in 2017. (BP)

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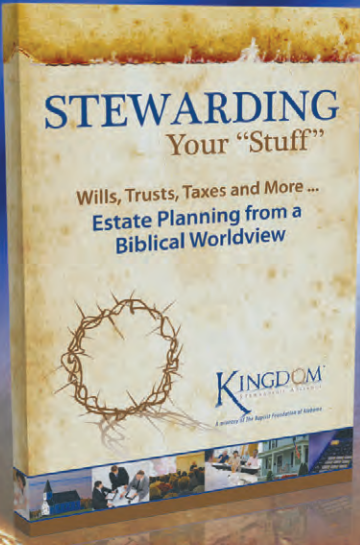
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'Pass the baton'

Pastors Conference to spotlight Father's Day with father-son speakers

Change is in the air for the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference, June 17–18 in New Orleans, themed "Changing: Lives, Communities, the World."

"I am changing. You are changing. The world around us is changing," said Grant Ethridge, president of the Pastors Conference and senior pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Va.

"But there is one thing that has not changed. God's plan for getting the gospel to the ends of the earth is still the local church. Changing lives, communities and the world is not optional. It is the command of Jesus."

Ethridge is praying that the Pastors Conference will impart "a burning desire to see lives changed in their community," to encourage pastors in "believing that their church, no matter the location or size, can be used of God to change lives around the world."

David Jeremiah, David Platt, Fred Luter Jr., Johnny Hunt, Jack Graham and Herb Reavis Jr. are among speakers.

Charles Billingsley, Jeff Askew, Sounds of Liberty, the Liberty Worship Choir and Chi Alpha will lead in worship.

Featured speakers

Honoring Father's Day, the Pastors Conference will spotlight four father-son teams as speakers: Don and Rob Wilton, Ronnie and Nick Floyd, Tony and Anthony Evans, and Bailey and Josh Smith.

Pastors Conference schedule

Session 1

Sunday, June 17, 5:30 p.m.

The Sunday evening session, with a Father's Day emphasis, will include father-son teams Josh and Bailey Smith, Don and Rob Wilton, Ronnie and Nick Floyd and Tony and Anthony Evans.

Josh Smith, lead pastor of MacArthur Blvd. Baptist Church, Irving, Texas, will be introduced by his father, evangelist Bailey Smith of Atlanta.

Don Wilton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C., will be introduced by his son Rob Wilton, lead pastor of Vintage Church, New Orleans.

Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of Cross Church, Springdale, Ark., will be introduced by his son Nick Floyd, campus pastor of Cross Church, Fayetteville, Ark.

Tony Evans, senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas, will be introduced by

his son Anthony Evans, recording artist and worship leader.

Sessions 2–4

Monday, June 18, 8:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. & 6 p.m.

Speakers for Monday include David Jeremiah, David Platt, Fred Luter Jr., Johnny Hunt, Jack Graham, Herb Reavis Jr., James MacDonald, Wayne Robertson and Phil Hoskins.

David Jeremiah is senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, El Cajon, Calif.

David Platt is lead pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, Ala.

Fred Luter Jr. is senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

Johnny Hunt is senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga.

Jack Graham is senior pastor of Pres-

tonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas.

Herb Reavis Jr. is senior pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

James MacDonald is senior pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, Chicago.

Wayne Robertson is pastor of Morningside Baptist Church, Valdosta, Ga.

Phil Hoskins is senior pastor of Higher Ground Baptist Church, Kingsport, Tenn.

Worship leaders

Worship leaders for the conference include: Charles Billingsley; Meredith Andrews; Anthony Evans; Jeff Askew; Sounds of Liberty of Liberty University; Liberty Worship Choir and Chi Alpha of Liberty Baptist Church, both from Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Va.

For more information and updates, visit www.sbp.net. (BP)

Josh Smith, lead pastor at MacArthur Boulevard Baptist Church, Irving, Texas, said he's excited about God's work in and through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

"Too often the statistics we give and the messages we communicate at the SBC paint a grim picture of the current and future state of the SBC. I don't buy it. God is at work," Smith said. "My desire is to simply encourage pastors to continue to be faithful to their lo-

cal church, faithful to the mission of the church and faithful to their cooperation with the SBC in fulfilling the Great Commission."

Smith wants to give and gain encouragement at the Pastors Conference. "I don't want to gather together this year and leave discouraged by statistics that communicate all we are not doing," Smith said. "I want to leave encouraged, equipped and empowered to continue to work hard for the sake of the gospel."

Smith said Ethridge, in planning the Pastors Conference, "has done a great job of honoring the past and looking forward to the future."

'We must not forget'

"We must not forget those who gave so much to get us where we are as a convention today, but we must also not forget to pass the baton to the next generation of pastors who are ready to run. I believe Grant is helping with that," Smith said.

Such encouragement and motivation is essential, he added.

"Every pastor needs to be encouraged and motivated in the hard work of pastoral ministry. That is the point of the Pastors Conference," Smith said. "I need it."

Pastors Conference sessions at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans will be at 5:30 p.m. June 17 and at 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 and 6 p.m. June 18.

For more information, visit www.sbp.net. (BP)

SBC launches annual meeting app

For the first time, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting this year can stay up-to-date with an SBC Annual Meeting smartphone app, which will include more than a dozen features, including maps, alerts, the Book of Reports and the Daily Bulletin.

The free app is available for iPhone, iPad, Android and BlackBerry users and can be downloaded by visiting <http://m.core-apps.com/sbc2012am> from a smartphone or by typing in "SBC Annual Meeting 2012" in the smartphone's app store.

Developed by Core-Apps,

some of the features include:

- ▶ push alerts that give users up-to-date news, such as changes in the meeting schedule.

- ▶ a list of exhibitors, including contact information for each exhibitor and the exhibitor's floor location.

- ▶ an interactive map of the exhibit hall.

- ▶ a Twitter stream of discussion about the annual meeting.

Users are required to fill out a brief profile.

The app already can be downloaded but is still being updated, and features will be added in the coming weeks. (BP)

Kassian to speak at Ministers' Wives Luncheon

Mary Kassian, distinguished professor of women's studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is this year's featured speaker for the 2012 Southern Baptist Convention Ministers' Wives Luncheon in New Orleans, La., on June 19.

Kassian has published books, Bible studies and videos including: "In My Father's House: Finding

Your Heart's True Home," "Vertically Inclined" and "Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild." She has been featured on radio shows such as Focus on the Family, Family Life Today and Revive Our Hearts.

The theme for this year is "The Hidden Person of the Heart," based on 1 Peter 3:3–4. A limited number of tickets are available at www.life-way.com/sbcwives. (BP)

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a 'God-wink' to me

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

5-year-old child shares Christ's love after losing parents in April 27, 2011, tornadoes

The message he brings to people is overwhelming," Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow, D-Red Bay, and member of First Baptist Church, Red Bay, said. He was referring to one special little boy in his district whose story has touched many lives — Morrow's included — since April 27, 2011.

Garrett LeClere, 5 years old at the time, was home with his family members in Phil Campbell on April 27 — the day a massive EF5 tornado descended on the town.

As the tornado neared Garrett's house, his parents Amy and Jay LeClere quickly moved Garrett and his sister, Marisa McCormick, into a bathtub where Marisa proceeded to shield Garrett's body. The tornado separated the siblings and threw them more than 100 yards from the house.

Jeff McCormick, Marisa's father and Amy LeClere's ex-husband, located Marisa first. She had been transported to Helen Keller Hospital in Sheffield with injuries.

More searching ensued and McCormick found that Garrett had been transported to Children's Hospital in Birmingham with a cerebral hematoma, broken left wrist and

broken right elbow. After discovering the news that Amy and Jay LeClere were killed in the storm, McCormick knew he had some tough news to deliver to young Garrett.

McCormick, who along with wife Stacey, took legal custody of Garrett after the tornado, recalls sitting Garrett down and beginning the difficult conversation. Garrett began by telling McCormick he remembered falling down and hurting his arms.

Then McCormick gently transitioned into the news about Garrett's parents. As he relayed that the LeCleres did not make it out of the storm alive, Garrett said, "Yeah, I know."

Instead of "breaking down" at the news, McCormick said he was surprised to watch as Garrett shed just a single tear.

"Well, they're in heaven," McCormick proceeded to say.

"I know," Garrett again replied.

"How do you know?" McCormick asked.

"Jesus told me," Garrett remarked.

McCormick was speechless. He said the spiritual knowledge Garrett demonstrated during the conversation shocked him. "The thing is, Garrett had never been raised in the church," McCormick explained. "Out of him, it floored me ... there was nothing I could say."

"[Garrett] was quite a fascinating young man. We certainly rejoice, in that his story ... demonstrates the truthfulness of Romans 8:28."

**Joe Godfrey
ALCAP**



Garrett LeClere sits in the speaker's chair in the House of Representatives in Montgomery.



Photos courtesy of Jeff McCormick

Garrett LeClere receives pins from the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments President Chauncey Wood.

It was not long before Morrow spotted the boy's miraculous story of survival on WHNT News 19's "Faith: After the Storm" report.

In late February, he invited Garrett and McCormick to join him as special guests at the Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) Legislative Prayer Breakfast in Montgomery — a weekly event during the regular state legislative session each year — and tour the state Capitol.

Morrow recalled how well Garrett articulated his thoughts when speaking one-on-one with people throughout the visit. "It was very amazing," Morrow shared. "I don't think I've experienced anything quite like it."

During the prayer breakfast, ALCAP Executive Director Joe Godfrey presented the news segment about Garrett to the crowd of about 50.

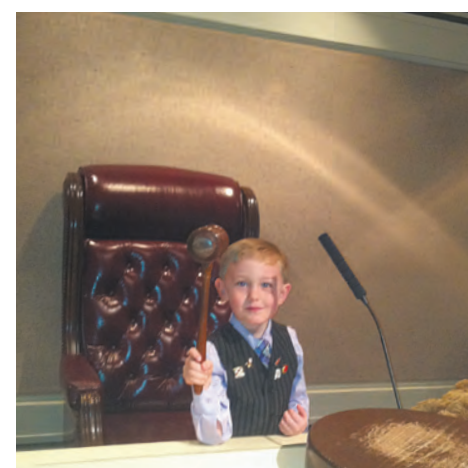
"We were honored to have him [Garrett] ... at our prayer breakfast," Godfrey reflected. "He was quite a fascinating young man. We certainly rejoice, in that his story ... demonstrates the truthfulness of Romans 8:28."

Morrow shared that some legislators in attendance that morning said Garrett was "anointed," and others said there was not a "dry eye in the house" among attendees.

And Garrett's lasting impression on people extended far beyond the prayer breakfast. As the group continued their tour in Montgomery, Garrett took opportunities to talk to people he encountered.

One of those people was Brandy Allen, assistant supervisor and committee clerk at the House of Representatives, whose office is adjacent to Morrow's.

During her conversation with Garrett, Allen relayed how sorry she was that Garrett had lost his parents and shared that she had lost "someone close" to her as well. She had lost her brother at a young age.



About an hour later, Garrett asked the group which person had talked about losing someone. Allen responded and what happened next took her by total surprise.

"[Garrett] walked over and said, 'Well, he's right here when you don't know it, giving you hugs,'" she recounted. "It was a 'God-wink' to me."

Morrow added, "I think a lot of people in Montgomery benefitted spiritually by meeting Garrett, and that's what I'm grateful for."

But it isn't just the state legislators who have benefitted.

McCormick said his own faith has "really grown" since Garrett permanently entered their lives. Garrett also has shared his story at Grace Baptist Church, Russellville, where the family attends church.

"God was able to reach [Garrett] and his surviving family members through this experience," Godfrey said. "God can take a tragedy and bring good from it — it's always a wonderful story." ❧

Still seeking solutions

Cuts for state's social programs less drastic than expected but level of funding a concern

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama's social programs "barely averted disaster" this year as lawmakers passed the 2013 general fund budget bill May 16. For weeks, various leaders of the states' social programs expected extensive cuts to mental health and youth services, as well as to Medicaid and the Department of Human Resources (DHR), all of which have steadily lost funding over the past several years.

At risk of taking the greatest hit in the upcoming fiscal year was Alabama's Medicaid program, according to Kimble Forrister, state coordinator of Alabama Arise, an advocacy coalition and sister organization of Arise Citizens' Policy Project.

"They (state lawmakers) were faced with the possibility of the end of Medicaid of Alabama," Forrister said. "The (Alabama) House had approved only \$400 million for Medicaid and if they had funded it at \$400 million the federal government would have pulled out of our program and that would have had dire consequences for our hospitals especially Children's Hospital. The rest of the state health system would be put at risk without Medicaid."

According to Forrister, lawmakers have known for 10 years that Medicaid needs new taxes or revenue streams.

"Alabama's Medicaid System is cut to the bone and so the Legislature flirted with a tobacco tax that

could have filled the gap, and then they ultimately decided to raid our children's piggy bank rather than raise taxes," Forrister noted. "When I say the children's piggy bank, I mean the Alabama Trust Fund that has the oil and gas revenues in it. They are diverting funds from it — that trust fund that our grandchildren were supposed to benefit from the earnings of — and this generation is taking money from that fund instead of paying their own bills."

But according to Tom Holmes, executive director of The Arc of Alabama, lack of adequate funding from some source could have been a life or death matter for a number of Alabamians.

"If you discontinue those (services) all together you are affecting if people survive or not," he said. "Unless there is some new revenue ... we just don't have enough resources to provide for those basic services whether they are DHR, youth services, public health or mental health. ... We as Alabamians like to think we are the state that has the lowest taxes in the country, and we brag about that, but what it means is we don't provide some of the basic services that our people need."

Leaders of other Alabama social programs will also have to determine how to stretch their allotted funds to continue providing services to needy people.

"We were particularly concerned about mental health, Department of Human Resources and corrections,"

Forrister said. "We are already at risk of a court sanction because of overcrowding in our prisons. The DHR commissioner, Nancy Buckner, is frantically looking for money because she is not sure there is enough money to keep the cash welfare program afloat. ... We already limit a mom with two kids to \$215 a month. ... Compared to the disaster we expected, we are breathing a sigh of relief, but none of these programs have enough money to function properly."

The Department of Youth Services was allotted a little more than \$7 million for 2013 as opposed to the nearly \$11 million lawmakers designated for 2012. DHR will receive more than \$62.5 million in 2013, which is about \$15 million less than the \$87 million lawmakers authorized for 2012. The Department of Mental Health general fund budget for 2013 was trimmed about \$13 million from 2012's \$116 million allocation.

In February, The Arc of Alabama held a Mental Health and Disabilities Legislative Day in Montgomery to draw attention to the backlash expected from further funding cuts for these services. Holmes initially announced that the department was "facing a proposed 25 percent funding cut for fiscal year 2013," which

he said in a press release would be "the most serious threat in our lifetime to our state's ability to provide services to the individuals it serves."

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), such a cut would have been one more hit to an already suffering social program. In November 2011, the organization reported that Alabama's general fund mental health budget has dropped 36 percent since 2009, leaving the state second in the country only to South Carolina in these types of actions. In that same report, NAMI stated that Alabama's average of state mental health spending per capita is \$77, while the U.S. average is \$122.

But in the end, the department is only facing a 10 percent reduction.

"It is a lot better than what we thought might have happened," Holmes said. "We should be able to maintain services for the next year or so to the current number of people in the mental health system. Basically it means that there may be more people (in need of services). ... Those who don't get served will wind up in other services — in jails or homeless or on the streets. ... We

just have to continue to educate the legislators and governor and general public, and hopefully they will understand a little better what the need is and try to come up with some solutions whether that be more state funding or other ways."

While advocacy groups work to educate the public, Christians also have a role to play, said Jim Dill, executive director of Alabama Council of Community Mental Health Boards "In biblical terms, we are commanded 'to serve the least of these' among us," Dill noted. "If the state continues to dismantle the safety net programs, then we are not serving the least of those among us. We are turning our backs on them."

This is really not a debate over who is responsible, the church or the government, he added.

"The needs are so great among so many people that churches alone, charities alone, nor government alone can get the job done. It takes all of us working together."

"There should be complimentary roles that exist between church and state in terms of meeting the needs of the least among us."

(Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)

"If you discontinue those (services) all together you are affecting if people survive or not."

**Tom Holmes
The Arc of Alabama**

Steer provides unique partnership between local farmer/rancher, international missionary

(continued from page 1)

Most of the time, he said, farmers cannot take time off to participate in a missions trip.

"When you present farmers with the idea of helping someone else by working on their farm, they understand that," Sparkman said. "It gives them a chance to feel like they are helping in their own way."

Kost said that with cattle prices at almost unprecedented highs, Steer has given more to missions this year — \$1.25 million — than in any other year in its history.

Perhaps just as important as the financial support provided through Steer is the ongoing relationship formed between the farmer and the missionary, Kost said. Farmers designate the missionary or organization that will receive the proceeds from the cows they raise. Since a cow can bear a calf about once a year for 7-10 years, the farm family is involved in supporting missions for the long-term.

"It's a unique partnership that ties together the farmer/rancher and the missionary," Kost said. "The

farmer prays for the missionary, and the missionary prays for the farmer. You have someone in Alabama who is interested in what is going on in Africa, and someone in Africa who is just as interested in the agricultural market in Alabama. It's a neat connection."

Kost said 1,200 farmers and ranchers in 38 states are currently involved in Steer, with approximately 2,000 cows in the program. In Georgia, 124 farmers are involved; in Alabama, there are currently only 15. However, O'Brien is working to get the word out to more farmers in the state, and cowboy churches are a big part of that effort.

For his part, Tabor said that his experience with Steer has been very positive and he believes Steer would be a good fit for anyone who has a farm or ranch and wants to support missions.

"As Christians, we want to do missions," Tabor said. "Steer is just a natural fit for anybody who likes to farm, and we know that when we're serving the Lord, we're always going to get a blessing."

For more information, visit www.greatcowmission.com or www.steerinc.com. ☛



Photo courtesy of Chulafinnee Baptist Church

HOUSTON HONORED FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Bettie Houston (right) receives a plaque March 18 from Pastor James Benefield for 50 years of dedicated service to Chulafinnee Baptist Church in Cleburne Baptist Association. She served in many capacities and was honored for the strong musical program she built at the church.

Attempts to legalize online gambling resurface

Reeling from slowed business and smaller coffers in the wake of a 2006 law to clamp down on the illegal practice of online gambling, the gambling lobby is roaring back. This time its focus is an effort to convince the government to license and regulate betting on Internet poker.

All online games involving wagering are currently illegal.

The renewed inspiration comes from a recent Justice Department opinion arguing that a major federal law on Internet gambling applies only to sports betting. The rallying point is legislation introduced last summer by Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas. Cosponsored by 30 representatives, the "Internet Gambling Prohibition, Poker Consumer Protection, and Strengthening UIGEA Act of 2011" (H.R. 2366) would legalize online wagering of poker and place the cyber activities under government regulation.

UIGEA is short for Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, which President Bush signed into law in 2006, but some argue the Barton bill would weaken the UIGEA instead of strengthen it as the title suggests.

The purpose of UIGEA was to clarify that Internet gambling is illegal, reinforcing a 1961 law that banned gambling via wireless communication. It also put enforcement teeth to the law by requiring banks and financial institutions to

block transactions between U.S.-based customer accounts and offshore gambling merchants, the biggest profiteers of the industry.

The effect of UIGEA on the online gambling industry's bottom line was immediate and pronounced. Stocks in online gambling websites plummeted almost overnight. Some sites shut down altogether. Last year, others still in operation offshore suffered yet another blow. In an April 2011 raid that has been dubbed "Black Friday," the government indicted the three biggest online poker profiteers — PokerStars, Full Tilt Poker and Absolute Poker — for bank fraud, money laundering and illegal gambling, freezing more than 75 bank accounts in 14 countries.

Fierce lobbying efforts

The pro-gambling lobby, however, remains undeterred. As one example, the Poker Players Alliance spent \$1.4 million last year lobbying Washington power brokers in support of Internet gambling initiatives such as Barton's bill, the *Roll Call* newspaper reported. This alliance, along with multiple other gambling special interest groups, shows no intention of stepping away from the table this year, either.

U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus, R-Alabama, chairman of the financial services committee, was an author of UIGEA and recalls when the bill came close to being repealed, a move he said would

have "opened the floodgates" to gambling on every computer.

Bachus, along with now House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp, R-Michigan and now House Judiciary Chairman Lamar Smith, R-Texas, also worked to block Sen. Harry Reid's, D-Nevada, efforts to legalize online gambling in December 2010.

Bachus remains committed to opposing any bill that would weaken the ban on illegal Internet gambling, including the Barton bill, Bachus told *The Alabama Baptist*, noting he is working to prevent the bill from gaining any traction.

The Barton bill primarily deals with the legalization of Internet poker and, according to the bill, the government would collect "substantial revenue." But the gambling purveyors also would rake in additional billions each year.

While Bachus does not disagree that government money can be made, "our values should not change or ... be able to be bought off," he stated, adding that the Barton bill "would really knock a giant hole in UIGEA" and would make online gambling difficult to enforce.

Bachus focuses particular concern on the younger generation. "The younger you start with an addiction, the harder it is to break," he explained, citing various institutions that have warned Internet gambling is "by far the most addictive form of gambling." (BP, TAB)

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? ☺

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Atco Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for senior pastor. Atco is a conservative Baptist church located 50 miles north of Atlanta in the foothills of northwest Georgia. We are a mid-size church with a great harvest surrounding us. Resumés may be sent to: Atco Baptist Church, ATTN: Jack Smith, Chairman, Pastor Search Committee, 20 Parmenter Street, Cartersville, GA 30120. We will be accepting resumés through the end of June.

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

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

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

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

PART-TIME, BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF STUDENTS: Pates Chapel Baptist Church in Jemison, Ala., is searching for a part-time, bivocational minister of students. Please email resumé to: hammitup@centurytel.net, or mail resumé to the church at: 190 County Road 295, Jemison, AL 35085, to the attention of Youth Search Committee.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF CHILDREN: Clearview Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of children (male or female). We are putting together a new staff with tremendous potential for growth and ministry. If you

are interested in this position, contact me at 205-854-2027 or email your resumé to: connie@clearviewbaptist.com or mail it to: 5271 Old Springville Road, Pinson, AL 35126. Pastor Robbie.

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

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CHURCH SECRETARY: Parkview Baptist Church in Decatur, Ala., is looking for a full-time church secretary. Please send resumés 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 resumés should also be directed.

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MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: Grand piano, Essex by Steinway with mahogany finish, like new. \$12,000. Electric organ, Hammond Concorde with carved oak cabinet, good condition. \$1,200. Contact Kim at 256-586-9000 for more information.

MISCELLANEOUS

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

Church ANNIVERSARIES

Beaverton Baptist marks 100 years of ministry

Beaverton Baptist Church celebrated a milestone anniversary April 29 marking 100 years of ministry.

Joyce White, a Beaverton Baptist member and anniversary organizer, said the event at the Lamar Baptist Association church was the product of a joint effort by many people.

The first worship service at 11 a.m. featured former Beaverton Baptist Pastor Larry Sexton. He delivered an encouraging message on keeping the faith and commended the church for 100 years of ministry.

Following the morning service, White said a “wonderful” potluck lunch was served on church grounds.

Charlie Ballew, former Beaverton Baptist pastor and current pastor of First Baptist Church, Winfield, delivered the second message at the 2 p.m. service.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, along with two other representatives, presented a plaque to the church with at least 125 people in attendance.

Also included in the day's services was a baptism service and special singing by various individuals including Scott Stokes, director of missions for Lamar Association.

Pastor Danny Stanford was encouraged by the day's event. “We had a wonderful crowd, two great messages and a good time of fellowship in the Lord,” Stanford said. “We hope to continue to minister unto the Lord [and] continue in ministry.”

Troy's Southside Baptist celebrates 75 years

Southside Baptist Church, Troy, celebrated its 75th anniversary Feb. 12 in a Sunday morning service that recognized both the milestone date as well as former Southside Baptist pastors.

Several presentations were made to the Salem-Troy Baptist Association church by representatives from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) and the city of Troy.

According to Pastor Andrew Knick, it was a “celebration-type of service” and SBOM state missionary Mike Jackson delivered the day's message.

Afterward the 400 attendees enjoyed a lunch together in the fellowship hall.

The church recently marked its vision-casting service a few weeks ago. Knick said Southside's purpose — “loving God, loving others, reaching the world” — is central to its vision focus over the next few years to connect families to church ministry. “[We're] really plugging into the family and getting the family more in tune with the direction God would have them to go,” he said.

Perdido youth group — 4 to 25 in 1 year

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Robert Klotz became Perdido Baptist Church's pastor almost two years ago, one of the first things he and his wife noticed was the lack of a youth program at the church. Though there wasn't money in the budget for a dedicated youth pastor, Klotz felt it was an important enough gap to fill that he decided to use the support of volunteers to help build a program.

The youth program at Perdido Baptist launched last May with just four teens and has since grown to

a group of about 20 to 25 weekly attendees. Because Klotz acts as both the senior and youth pastor, the youth group meets on Thursday evenings so he's able to lead that event as well as standard Wednesday night services at church.

'Impressive growth'

“In just a year's time it's pretty impressive growth, and nothing we can attribute to anything but the Lord working,” Klotz said. “At first, we bribed the kids with candy to get them to invite friends, and then it caught on and we started having several youth who aren't from Christian homes attend.”

Because so many of the youth are “young” Christians, Klotz focuses the curriculum around basic discipleship. He also includes a lot of application-based lessons, since he said the youth are interested in learning practical ways to incorporate learning from the Bible into their everyday lives.

“Nothing has excited me more with this group than those nights we see them respond and you see something click,” he said. “The best part of that experience is those nights when you have someone respond to the gospel.”

Since the group began last spring, four youth group members have been baptized.



Photo courtesy of Perdido Baptist Church
'CALLED' — Pastor Robert Klotz takes one in the face in support of the church's youth program.

Klotz is quick to recognize the work of the volunteers, who help with various aspects of the youth group.

Perdido member Mary Richburg prepares meals each Thursday for the youth and has been encouraged by the group's growth in both numbers and enthusiasm.

“This is a group of really good young people, and for me this is something I feel called to do,” she said. “Brother Robert is really involved with them, and it helps that he's a young pastor and can connect with them.”

Klotz said he hopes his church will soon be able to support a part-time — and eventually full-time — youth pastor, but meanwhile he's enjoying watching the youth group start to truly thrive.

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By Christine Kapurch
Correspondent, TAB

Someone You Should Know

ANN WALDREP

Providence Baptist Church, Town Creek
Muscle Shoals Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Psalm 121:1

FAVORITE HYMN: “Jesus I Come”

HOBBIES: Working in the garden,
spending time with the grandchil-
dren and great-grandchildren

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 49

years of marriage to Silas; three
children, Rickey, Silicia and Tim;
seven grandchildren; and four
great-grandchildren



WALDREP

Ann Waldrep, 80, has been a member of Providence Baptist Church for 72 years. She has been involved in WMU for 15 years and taught Sunday School for 45 years. Waldrep has traveled on one missions trip and worked for the missions department at her church. She has also been a member of the choir for 60 years.

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: I was raised in a Christian home but not until I was 13 ... I

was walking with a group of girls and they said, “I tell you what, we need to let the Lord have His way in our life.” I was saved that night and I have been a member ever since Aug. 13, 1945.

Q: What led you to serve WMU?

A: I was raised in a Christian home that served and it just seemed that I should follow that.

Q: Why have you continued through the years?

A: It's been my life and family. The church has always been the front part of my life.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: It doesn't demand anything. I gladly give my time for what Christ has done for me.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: [They support me] wholeheartedly in every way. They are all involved in the church.

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

A: I'll stay [involved] as long as the Lord gives me the strength and the health to be involved.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 27

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

HE LIVES ETERNALLY: CARRY ON
Luke 24:1-8, 36-40, 44-53

Clearly Jesus' resurrection was a bodily resurrection, i.e. His body was flesh and bone. Indeed bodily resurrection is the only kind of resurrection. It is sheer nonsense to talk, as some do, as if the resurrection was a God-given vision meant to assure His disciples that Jesus had survived death in spirit form and was alive on the other side. That describes immortality of the soul but hardly resurrection of the body. Put it another way. The same body that was put into the tomb came out of the tomb with new and divine life never to die again and appeared to many witnesses. Eating and drinking with Him, even touching Him, were objective physical events just as other acts of eating, drinking and touching. Having "a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44) in the resurrection does not mean a body made of spirit instead of flesh. The language means having a real body perfectly indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Women Visit the Tomb (1-8)

At first light on the first day of the week women followers of Jesus returned to the tomb. Jesus' hasty "burial" Friday evening was incomplete. Now these came to finish the job with the "aromatic spices and perfumes" (23:56).

Because the Jews did not embalm they used spices like spikenard and myrrh to mask the stench of rotting flesh.

When they came to the tomb they found the stone moved so they could enter easily. But when they went in, what they found was not what they expected to find. The Lord's body was not there.

While they puzzled over this, two men in dazzling apparel appeared. These were angels because their message to the women is essentially the same as that of the angel in Matthew's Gospel (28:5-7). "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" The explanation for the empty tomb is simple. Jesus is alive. His resurrection should occasion no surprise because "while He was still

in Galilee," i.e. from the beginning of His ministry, He taught His followers that sinful men would crucify Him but He would rise on the third day. Had they remembered His words they would not have come with spices to anoint a dead body.

Jesus Appears in Jerusalem (36-40)

This appearance of the risen Lord is the same as the one in John 20:19-25. Before this time Jesus had appeared only to individuals or small groups. Now he suddenly stood among the "eleven and those with them" (24:33). They were not only startled but terrified, thinking they saw a ghost. To calm their fears Jesus invited them to behold His hands and feet and to touch His body to see that it was a real body of flesh and bones. As further proof, He asked for food and ate it.

A Commission in Jerusalem (44-49)

On this occasion the Master taught from "the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms" all the things written there about Him. The Law and the Prophets were the first two divisions of the Hebrew Bible. Psalms was the first and largest book in the third division, usually called the Writings. Some people cannot find anything about Jesus in the Old Testament but He had no difficulty doing so. All those prophecies were fulfilled in Him. With His help the disciples were able to understand that the Messiah would be a King and rule a Kingdom but first must suffer and then enter into His glory. It was all part of God's eternal purpose to offer forgiveness of sins to all peoples, beginning in Jerusalem.

Jesus ended this appearance with a charge to be His witnesses, i.e. to tell the story, in the power of the Spirit, which shortly would "clothe" them.

Jesus' Ascension (50-53)

Some days later (Acts 1:3-4) Jesus led His disciples out to Bethany. He lifted His hands and blessed them, perhaps on the order of the high priest who did this when He had finished His work on a festival day. Jesus had finished His work and now blessed His disciples. While He was blessing them He was taken up into heaven.

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

A LEGACY OF LOVE

Acts 17:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15;
1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

Love Compelled (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

Read enough of Paul and you realize that the reason for doing something was as important as what was done. Jesus stressed this principle in His Sermon on the Mount, where He rebuked those who did good things for the wrong reasons (see Matt. 6:1-18). Paul was raised in a religious culture that glorified the deed and ignored the motive. But in his relationship with Jesus Christ he came to realize that fear, guilt, a sense of duty or a desire to impress God or others were inadequate as a reason for sharing the gospel. In verses 14 and 15 he reveals the inner urge that drove him to spend his life the way he did. The five words, "For Christ's love compels us" say it all: above all else this is what Paul wanted the Corinthians to believe about him.

When the implication of the statement "He died for all" began to get hold of Paul, it changed permanently his feeling about every person in the world. The fact that every person he met was loved unconditionally by God and was one for whom Christ died defined Paul's ministry. This is why Paul's evangelism never exploited or manipulated people. Rather he loved them the way Christ did and hoped for their conversion to Christ's love.

Interestingly the other place where Paul uses the particular Greek expression for "Christ's love" is Romans 8:35. The reality that nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Rom. 8:39) compels us all the more to share this greatest of news with others.

Love Communicated (Acts 17:1-4)

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke left Philippi more convinced than ever that Christ alone was their central message (see chapter 16). They made their way through the mountains of Macedonia along the Egnatian Road, through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, the capital city of the Macedonian province. They stayed in the city long enough to found a new church. Thessalonica was made a free city by the Romans

in 42 B.C. The message on which the church was founded is made plain in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, which was to turn from idols and serve "a living and true God."

Paul first made known the gospel in the synagogue for three successive Sabbaths, showing from the Scripture lessons that Jesus was the Messiah. Among the "God-fearing Greeks" were a number of influential women. Women were known to have considerable social and civic prominence in Macedonia. It is also worth noting the prominence of Silas in this section, particularly in connection with the synagogue witness (see also verse 4 and 10). He is usually in the background, with the focus being on Paul.

Love Continued (1 Thess. 1:2-10)

Paul, Silas and Timothy had preached in Thessalonica, and those who had responded to the gospel were now enduring harassment and persecution for their faith (see 1:6, 2:14). Yet Paul does not thank them for their response but rather gives thanks for God. "He has chosen you" is a key theme of the letter (2:12, 4:7, 5:24). It is not a matter of God arbitrarily choosing some individuals for salvation and some for damnation, nor is it a denial of human responsibility, but an affirmation of God's initiative in forming the community of chosen people.

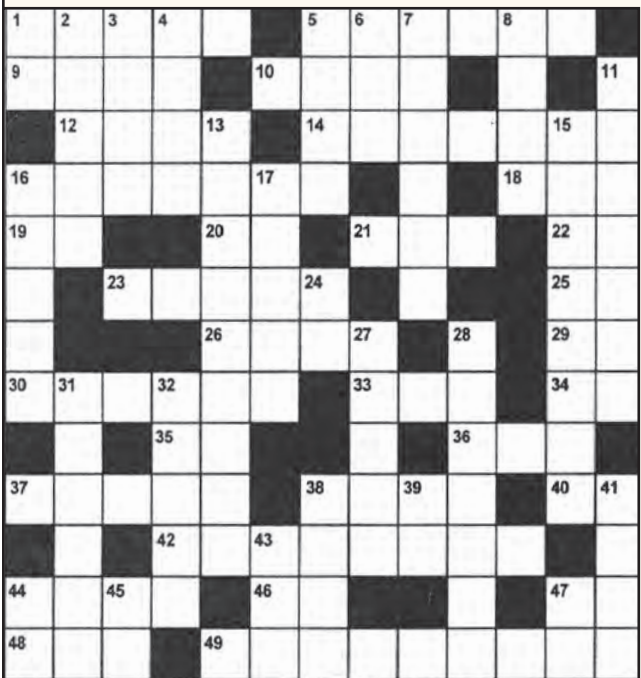
Paul notes that the Thessalonians "became imitators of us." This is not egotism. Paul is presenting himself as an example (see also 1 Cor. 11:1), which reflects the Hellenistic pattern in which teachers set forth their own life before their students as an example of their philosophy.

Verses 9 and 10 reflect an early creed developed in the Antioch church and adapted by Paul. The three verbs in the first stanza summarize the Christian experience: "turn," "serve" and "wait." These three verbs correspond to the virtues of "faith," "hope" and "love" noted by Paul in verse 3. All three of the verbs are active, including the active waiting for the final triumph of God.

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

Christian Crossword

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Across

- 1. Sermon on the _____. (Matt. 5-7)
- 5. Barabbas was in prison for insurrection and this. (Luke 23:19)
- 9. Old Testament priest and book.
- 10. Hill made of sand.
- 12. Beersheba means "well of the ____." (Gen. 21:31)
- 14. The Lord will do this to Zion. (Isa. 51:3)
- 16. The Sovereign Lord will ____ his anger on Israel. (Ezek. 7:3)
- 18. O taste and ____ that the Lord is good. (Ps. 34:8)
- 19. Master of Education. (abbr.)
- 20. A, B, C, ____, ____.
- 21. What the risen Jesus did with broiled fish. (Luke 24:43)
- 22. Mister. (abbr.)
- 23. I will not ____ you as orphans. (John 14:18)
- 25. Annum. (abbr.)
- 26. Where lions lie down. (Ps. 104:22)
- 29. Radium. (abbr.)

- 30. Nehemiah prayed before the God of _____. (Neh. 1:4)
- 33. One of Noah's sons. (Gen. 6:10)
- 34. J, ____, ____.
- 35. Slang for simple.
- 36. Little Jack Horner's pastry.
- 37. A half shekel was given to ____ for one's life. (Ex. 30:15)
- 38. A servant for life had an awl put through this. (Deut. 15:17)
- 40. District Superintendent. (abbr.)
- 42. The apostles were unschooled, ____ men. (Acts 4:13)
- 44. Jesus' garment did not have one of these. (John 19:23)
- 46. I ____ WHO I AM. (Ex. 3:14)
- 47. Expression of mild sympathy.
- 48. Is the Lord's ____ too short?
- 49. Boaz told his men not to do this to Ruth. (Ruth 2:15)

Down

- 1. Come to ____, all you who are weary. (Matt. 11:28)

- 2. Layer of the atmosphere.
- 3. Mountains in Asia.
- 4. Nickname for Nathan.
- 5. You expected ____, but see, it turned out to be little. (Hag. 1:9)
- 6. One in Spain.
- 7. Type of place where 5,000 were fed. (Mark 6:35)
- 8. One of the kinds of love.
- 11. Believers receive this kind of life.
- 13. Song of Rehob. (2 Sam. 8:3)
- 15. Others ____, He seems to be advocating foreign gods. (Acts 17:18)
- 16. An inheritance of Asher. (Josh. 19:30)
- 17. Number of Sceva's sons. (Acts 19:14)
- 24. ____ Gedi. (1 Sam. 24:1)
- 27. An inheritance of Issachar. (Josh. 19:19)
- 28. Paul appealed to him. (Acts 25:25)
- 31. Jewish Queen of Persia.
- 32. This of the wicked is like that of a snake. (Ps. 58:4)
- 38. Zacchaeus sat on one of these. (Luke 19)

- 39. Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
- 41. The people of Rabbah labored with these. (1 Chron. 20:3)
- 43. Starting a quarrel is like breaching one of these. (Prov. 17:14)
- 44. Salvation Army. (abbr.)
- 45. I ____ the light of the world. (John 8:12)
- 47. ____ a hen gathers her chicks. (Matt. 23:37)





BP photo

Planting seeds through SONGS

Songwriter nurtures worship for diverse culture in India

Jeff Bourque made his way to India from Music City, USA to share the basics of songwriting. His mission: to help musicians from several churches in India write songs that speak to their highly diverse culture. In a nation where only one of every 70 people believes in Jesus, Indian Christians are surrounded by Hindu temples full of idols and such sounds as the Muslim call to prayer.

Ethan Leyton, an ethnomusicologist, and Mani Dutta, an Indian pastor, invited Bourque, worship leader for Grace Community Church, Nashville, to conduct a songwriting workshop for 18 young men and women from several Indian churches in urban settings.

Leyton and Dutta “dreamed and prayed,” as Leyton put it, “that instead of [English-speaking] Indian believers singing Hillsong and Chris Tomlin songs all the time, perhaps they could begin writing their own English songs for worship.”

These believers have much to offer Christian music, with their distinctive identity in living out their faith in India, Leyton said, voicing a hope that their songs also might be used in American churches one day. Leyton has organized 20 songwriting workshops for believers around southern Asia during the last seven years. Bourque’s workshop, however, is unique because it’s the first one in English. In mega-cities where multiple languages are spoken, many Christians and young professionals are more comfortable communicating in English because it’s the language they have in common.

Bible college student and church worship leader Amit Dhawan had struggled to write songs long before the workshop, where he worked with three others to write the song “The Lord is Good.”

“Many times I came to know the truth about God through worship songs, and it encouraged me to come closer to God,” Dhawan said. “[As a songwriter] I want people to understand that God still saves, heals and delivers people from darkness.”

Like Dhawan, the other budding songwriters also had some musical skill, but almost no experience writing songs centered on God for the purpose of building up the church. Among the participants were a former drug addict, a software developer, a banker, an engineering student, a pastor and the grandson of a witchcraft-practicing village elder.

Bourque, fueled by his 22 years of songwriting experience and a passion for the local church, became interested in teaching a workshop like this in 2005. While leading worship

overseas for a group of cross-cultural workers, he heard about the importance of equipping new believers to communicate their experiences with God through song.

Believers from different cultures should be able to sing songs that relate to their experiences, rather than only importing songs from other cultures, Bourque said.

“When you have an experience of salvation, everyone is saved to Christ, but everyone is saved from something,

Bible college students Sethi and Amit Dhawan practice their song, ‘This is not Tradition,’ during a workshop for budding songwriters from various urban churches in India.

and that looks different,” Bourque said. “So the people of this country will have a completely different perspective on what it means to be a believer.” Although the workshop was conducted in English, the language barrier was somewhat present, but it didn’t stop Bourque from connecting with the students not only from India but also from Bhutan and Africa.

Impressed by how quickly the group built trust, Bourque credits their bond — and their readiness to learn — with knowing that their lives had been greatly impacted by Jesus.

“I mean, it was two straight days of thinking of nothing but songs and songwriting and I started to get fatigued,” Bourque said. “But rather than taking a break, the students said, ‘Let’s write another song!’”

Sanjeet Devar, a church worship leader, worked with three others to write the song “You’re My Friend,” expressing God’s nature as an approachable friend, drawing from John 15:13–15. “He created everything that we see and know and chooses to call us His friend,” Devar said. “God is nearer and more approachable than what most people in my culture think.”

The last night of the workshop ended with a time of worship. Together various participants sang the four songs they had completed. No one noticed the myriad mosquitoes or the building’s flickering electricity as they praised God with their voices and with shakers, djembe, guitar and keyboard.

“I looked around the circle as we were worshiping one night just playing guitars and banging on instruments and singing songs,” Bourque said, “and their hearts were so humble and filled with love that came from an understanding of who God is and a desire to know more [of Him]. They were just obviously committed followers of Christ, without any pretense or shells, and that was such a blessing for me to spend time with them.”

The experience sparked a prayer in Bourque for the seeds of God’s truth in the songs to bear fruit in the church in India.

And in his own interaction with the students, Bourque said, “Their excitement to write songs motivated me to write more.”

To listen to the songs created by the south Asian songwriters, go to www.go2southasia.org/?p=6152.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed. (BP)

Judson College’s 50th annual

Ministers Golf Tournament

winners



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Pastor Chris Kroll (left) of Hartford Baptist Church receives the first place trophy from President David Potts at Judson College’s 50th annual Ministers Golf Tournament on May 14–15 at the Marion Military Institute golf course. Music and Senior Adults Minister Charles Keown of Lakewood Baptist Church, Phenix City, placed second, and third place was split between Pastor David Byrd of Northside Baptist Church, Jasper; Pastor Ty Parten of Thomasville Baptist Church; and Pastor Bradley Rushing of Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan.

Clean water

Ladies Sunday School class in La. helps provide water well in Central Asia

When Ella Creel heard children were dying for lack of clean water, she knew something had to be done. But the problem was half a world away, in the high desert of southern Tajikistan.

And her church didn't have a lot of resources. "We bump up around 100 in attendance on Sunday," said Creel, a member of East Winnfield Baptist Church, Joyce, La. "Our Sunday School class is just 18 members, mostly widows, mostly on fixed incomes. We've never had more than \$100 in our class treasury."

They had been studying a series of lessons in their LifeWay Sunday School quarterlies about the Christian's responsibility to make good use of the resources God has given them.

When the class came to the story of Jesus miraculously feeding several thousand people with a little boy's lunch, they pondered the question that the disciples initially asked. As Creel put it: "what that little bit of food was among so many people."

"That's the way we felt. What can we do? This is a little class with no money."

Then Creel received a call from one of the younger class members, truck driver Terri Provence, who was on the road that evening. Provence had heard John Avant, pastor of nearby First Baptist Church, West Monroe, talk about his recent trip to Tajikistan in Central Asia, where wells were being dug so villages

could have clean water to drink, in a project coordinated by the aid organization Baptist Global Response.

Most families in the region draw water for drinking and cooking from a muddy river or canal, Avant told his audience.

And water-borne diseases kill 10 percent of children under 2.

"Terri just came unglued when she heard that," Creel recounted. "She called me and asked, 'Why can't we do something?'"

The class had an answer to that question, but it didn't sit well with Provence.

"When we were studying those Sunday School lessons, our class had a lot of comments about how we used to do this or used to do that, but now we're old and it's time to let the young people do it," Creel recalled. "We couldn't do what we used to do, and we never had tackled anything very big anyway."

Challenging lessons

"But those lessons challenged us ... so we agreed we would do what we could while we waited our turn for Jesus to come and get us."

Creel called the West Monroe church and talked with Mark Fenn, the missions pastor. She was taken aback to hear that drilling a well cost \$3,000 on average. She told him the class might raise \$50, maybe \$200, and asked if they could partner with First, West Monroe, in drilling a well. Fenn agreed for the ladies' class to raise money for a year and send whatever they could.

But Provence wasn't satisfied with a \$50 or \$200 goal. She brought a five-gallon water jug to class on Sunday — marked off in dollar amounts up to \$3,000.

"We were amazed. We were thinking, 'What could we do?'" Creel said. "But our class got on board."

"We adopted a theme, 'To outlive your life,' and our class took on a new life. God had put it in our hearts to drill a well."

When the ladies brought their first offering, it totaled \$370. After several weeks, it reached \$800.

To say they were excited would be an understatement. Then Provence took a better-paying job.

"Terri pledged another \$200 from her first paycheck and suggested we use it to buy ingredients for hamburgers and hold a fundraiser at the church," Creel said. "Our pastor agreed, and that dinner raised \$800."

"People outside our class got excited then and started giving. One man sold a bunch of old batteries and donated the money he got. Another one sold some scrap iron he had and gave that," Creel said, her voice filling with emotion. "One woman received \$150 from her office staff on Bosses' Day and told me, 'I don't know anywhere I want to use this more than this water well.' A second woman held a garage sale, thinking it would generate about \$200 but praying for \$400."

"At the end of the day, she was able to give us \$970 — the amount needed to reach our \$3,000 goal — and she had some left over to donate to the church's youth fund."

What began as a year-long project had taken less than four months and produced a result 15 times their best-case scenario.

"It was a God thing from start to finish," Creel said. "We had determined to do what we could, but God wanted to show us what He could do." (BP)



BP photo

Two boys pump clean water from a well in a part of Tajikistan where most families draw water for drinking and cooking from a muddy river or canal.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Assemblies of God congregation forced to identify members

TEHRAN, Iran — Leaders of the Assemblies of God's (AOG) Central Church of Tehran told their congregation May 6 that authorities have demanded a list of names and identification numbers of church members, a major risk to converts from Islam.

Church leaders then asked members in attendance to volunteer their information.

"This [government move] is basically to make sure the church is not taking in new members and to make it difficult and risky for non-Christians to attend," Monsour Borji, an Iranian Christian and advocacy officer for rights initiative Article 18, told Compass Direct News.

"It is an effort to limit the church, basically."

Article 18 is a London-based initiative of the United Council of Iranian Churches (Hamgaam), which seeks to defend and promote religious freedoms in Iran. Hamgaam is composed of Iranian Christian churches in Europe.

Islamic governor opens way for 'crackdown' on Christians

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The election of a hard-line Islamic governor in Indonesia's Aceh Province in April appears to have opened the way for a crackdown on the minority Christian community, which saw 17 churches sealed shut in early May.

Emboldened by the April 9 election of Zaini Abdullah of the militant Aceh Party (Partai Aceh, or PA), hundreds of Islamists demonstrated in front of the office of Aceh Singkil regency April 30, demanding area church buildings be not only sealed but demolished.

Christian leaders told Compass Direct News that, besides the usual pretext of lack of church permits — applications for which local authorities routinely deny or delay — the demands were based on a controversial agreement that Christians were reportedly forced to sign in 2001 stipulating that there be only one church and four chapels in the regency.

Darfur Sudan Council of Churches, Sudan Aid shut down

NYALA, South Sudan — Security agents in Sudan's South Darfur state have closed down the Nyala offices of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and relief group Sudan Aid, sources said.

Agents from the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) arrived at the organizations' compound in Nyala at 8 a.m. April 22, ordered SCC staff members to hand over keys of offices and vehicles and, without explanation, ordered them to leave immediately, an SCC staff worker said.

NISS agents also closed down a church clinic that was serving the needy in the area.

The day after the closure of the SCC and Sudan Aid offices, staff members reported to work only to find more than a dozen security personnel, some carrying arms, cordoning off the compound.

Indian pastor, women, children beaten by Hindu extremists

CHHATTISGARH — Hindu extremists trying to stop the burial of a convert to Christianity in April in Chhattisgarh state beat a pastor and other Christians, including children and two 60-year-old women who fell unconscious, sources told Compass Direct News (CDN).

"About 300 extremists led by the village head, Satnatram Pawar, suddenly surrounded the house shouting anti-Christian slogans, mocked and verbally abused us," one Christian leader told CDN.

At least 10 Christians sustained injuries and received medical treatment, sources said, adding that the attack went on for more than six hours. The assailants accused the Christians of having poisoned Pawar.

Protestant house churches targeted in China

BEIJING — China's government is engaged in a three-phase campaign to eradicate Protestant house churches, according to a statement released April 20 by the ChinaAid Association (CAA).

The government's strategy was clearly outlined in a document released last September during a training class for "Patriots in the Christian Community" run by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), according to an unnamed CAA source.

The document called for local authorities to conduct a thorough investigation of house churches nationwide and create dossiers on each of them as Phase 1 of the three-phase strategy.