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INSIDE



Father of 3 raises boys 'to be a resource to the world'

◆ Page 3



Alabama Baptists continue disaster relief efforts in District 11

◆ Pages 5-9



Lod Massacre: May 30 marks 40 years since deadly attack in Israel

◆ Pages 12-13

New missions strategy unleashed

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist



en.wikipedia.org

Carpathian Mountains

Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections offers full-circle partnership

Are Alabama Baptists about to make history with a groundbreaking new missions strategy concept? Quite possibly, but at the very least Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections is a great step forward, said one international missionary from Alabama.

"This new strategy deals with the biblical mandate of Acts 1:8, to go into the utter parts of the world," said Tim Akers, who serves with his wife, Donna, in Ukraine. "The biblical mandate is not only personally but also corporately — for churches to be involved in all four areas mentioned in Acts 1:8."

The connection part comes naturally through a common tie to the state, he added.

Akers should know. He's been connecting to churches and associations from Alabama his entire missions career.

The Akerses both grew up in the Florence area, met while in college

at the University of North Alabama, served churches in the state and left to serve on the international missions field 13 years ago with strong Alabama support in tow.

Their missions experience thus far has primarily been focused in and around the metropolitan city of Lviv, Ukraine, but their role is about to change. The Akerses will be adapting their missions efforts to reach an unengaged, unreached people group — the Hutsul — in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine near Romania and Moldova.

"We don't know exactly what's up there. No missionaries have been assigned to this group yet," Tim Akers said in a phone interview from the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association's missions house in Florence where he, Donna and their three children — 19-year-old Shane, 18-year-old Kaylee and 13-year-old Levi — are staying while on stateside assignment. Tim, Donna and Levi will return to the field in October, but Shane and Kaylee will stay stateside for college.

"This is an area where ... Donna and I can't live enough lifetimes to

reach this group on our own," Akers said, noting the mountain people are difficult to reach socially and physically.

The weather is harsh, especially with the amount of snow that falls, and the lifestyle is difficult, he said. "In some cases, there is no running water and no gas heat." Most of the

people are farmers or loggers, and most use a horse and wagon for transportation, Akers noted. "It is a slow-paced, simple life, but it is a very hard life."

And it's a life that Alabama Baptists from Colbert-Lauderdale Association are about

to become uniquely familiar with.

As the first official Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections connector group, Colbert-Lauderdale Association will partner with the Akerses and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) in the new missions partnership strategy. The strategy was adopted during the 2011 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

The SBOM's global missions office and Alabama Woman's Missionary Union will lead the effort from the state level. Missionaries from
(See 'Churches,' page 4)



TIM & DONNA AKERS

Florida court finds state convention liable for pastors

State conventions have been the subject of many lawsuits through the years, but a recent verdict marks a historical moment with a state convention being held liable for a pastor's actions. It could hold serious ramifications for all state conventions and other organizations if the verdict stands following the appeals process.

A jury found May 17 that the Florida Baptist Convention (FBC) is liable for failing to do an adequate background check before recruiting and training a former church planter now in prison for molesting a 13-year-old boy.

According to the *Orlando Sentinel*, witnesses during a two-week trial testified that former pastor Douglas Myers, currently serving a seven-year prison term, faced allegations of inappropriate behavior with young boys at churches in Alabama and Maryland before he started Harbor Baptist Fellowship, Eustis, Fla., in 2002. That's where Myers met the boy he confessed to molesting over a six-month period in 2005.

Myers, 63, had no previous convictions prior to his 2006 arrest and January 2007 guilty plea. The convention's lawyer argued that Myers was not employed by Florida Baptists and that criminal, credit and motor-vehicle background checks on him turned up nothing.

Alabama connection

After his arrest, however, a former deacon came forward to say his suspicions about Myers split a previous church in Alabama, prompting about half the active members to leave. The deacon was told by the current pastor of one of Myers' former churches in Maryland that if the Alabama congregation had "done its job" and contacted former employers they would have been advised that Myers was unfit to be a pastor or to work around children.

A 2007 lawsuit filed by the mother of a victim identified only by initials accused the state convention, Lake County
(See 'Accusations,' page 14)

COMMENT

Making History in New Orleans

Few things are certain when Southern Baptists gather for their annual convention meeting. But the election of Fred Luter Jr. as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is as certain as anything can be. Luter, who currently serves as first vice president of the SBC, will likely be elected without opposition. If someone else is nominated, it will be for personal reasons, not as a serious challenge.

Alabama Baptists know Luter as the popular preacher and pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans. He has spoken at numerous state functions and is always well received.

Alabama Baptists also know him as an effective pastor who successfully shepherded his congregation following Hurricane Katrina even though major portions of the congregation temporarily relocated to three different cities, including Birmingham.

Luter also is an African-American and, if elected, will be the first African-American to serve as president of the SBC. That his election will take place in New Orleans is filled with historical irony, not because the city is Luter's hometown but because New Orleans has been in the middle of Southern Baptists' struggle with race relations.

In 1969 Southern Baptists gathered in New Orleans for their annual convention amid fear and trepidation. The week before the annual meeting, a highly respected state paper editor titled his editorial "Disruption of the Convention Is Possible." He wrote, "There is a prospect, however, for something very dramatic and dangerous to happen in New Orleans. This is the possibility of the convention being confronted by ultraextremists with 'Black Manifesto.'"

Past racial tensions

Racial tensions were high across the nation in the late 1960s. An African-American group led by James Foreman had invaded churches from New York City to New Orleans in the weeks before the SBC annual meeting demanding economic reparations for the injustices suffered by blacks through slavery and racism. SBC officials planned what to do if the group targeted the New Orleans annual meeting, but the 1969 convention passed without incident.

It was the 1970 annual meeting when a group of 15 African-Americans stormed the stage in Denver and demanded to speak to the convention. The program committee granted them 10 minutes.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

That the incident did not turn violent was due in no small part to the masterful work of Lee Porter, who was first vice president at the time.

But it was not the threat of confrontations or the demands for reparations that moved Southern Baptists forward on race relations. In 1968, the year Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, SBC messengers adopted a statement titled "The Crisis in our Nation." In a section titled "Confessions," the statement said, in part, "As Southern Baptists ... claiming special ties of spiritual unity with the large conventions of Negro Baptists in our land, we have come far short of our privilege in Christian brotherhood. Humbling ourselves before God, we implore Him to create in us a right spirit of repentance and to make us instruments of His redemption, His righteousness, His peace and His love toward all men."

The statement went on to call Southern Baptists to be involved in the "social issues of our day," including race relations, as individuals, as churches and through SBC institutions.

Looking back, many say the 1968 statement provided denominational approval for aggressive actions in race relations.

The SBC Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board) and the SBC Christian Life Commission (now Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission) were the first to take actions with expanded emphases in race relations.

It was not until 1974 that messengers once again faced the question of race relations. That year an African-American pastor from Frankfort, Ky., was nominated for second vice president. In nominating Charles King, pastor of Corinthian Baptist Church for 25 years, Herman Bowers, pastor of First Baptist Church, Frankfort, said it was time for messengers to show they were serious about race

relations. King, who formerly taught at Tuskegee Institute, won on the second ballot out of a field of seven candidates. He was the first African-American to serve as a national officer of the SBC.

African-American leaders asked if King would be allowed to "go through the steps" and become SBC president. The question reflected a culture of moving up in leadership much like Alabama Baptist presidents have done for the past decade. But before that question could be answered, King died of a stroke weeks short of the 1975 annual meeting.

It was 20 years before another African-American was elected second vice president. Gary Frost, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio, was elected in 1994 after serving on the SBC Executive Committee. In 1995, Luter became the third African-American to serve as a national SBC officer when he was tapped as second vice president.

Adoption of apology

That same year Southern Baptists officially apologized for the denomination's role in slavery and for condoning racism for much of the denomination's history. Charles T. Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, at the time, chaired the SBC Resolutions Committee that year and spearheaded the adoption of the apology.

Another 15 years passed before Southern Baptists had another major development in race relations. As part of the Great Commission Resurgence, leaders wanted to be sure the denomination focused attention on all people. The result was an SBC resolution affirming ethnic diversity in SBC leadership and participation approved in 2011 in Phoenix. Again, entities were encouraged to involve ethnic Baptists in governance and instructed to report on steps they took to encourage ethnic diversity.

That same year Luter was elected first vice president, the first African-American to serve in the convention's second-highest office. Almost immediately, demands began for his election as president. When that happens, as we expect it will, Southern Baptists will have made history by electing their first African-American president.

Luter's election also will illustrate the steady, focused work done in local communities among cooperating churches, in associations and state conventions that have concentrated on building bridges and cooperation between blacks and whites.

While there "are miles to go before we rest" in race relations, Southern Baptists have come a long way. Today the SBC is acknowledged as the most diverse denominational body in America. Unlike 1969, messengers will not gather in New Orleans fearful of being "invaded" by African-Americans. Instead, most anticipate electing an African-American as SBC president. That is a historic change worthy of note.

A full report on the upcoming SBC annual meeting will be in the June 28 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Onsite, immediate coverage will begin June 17 with pre-convention activities and go through the final gavel of the SBC annual meeting June 20 via Facebook (*The Alabama Baptist* newspaper), Twitter (@AlabamaBaptist) and our Breaking News blog (<http://thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com>).



"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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'Intentional' parenting

Father of 3 raises boys 'to be a resource to the world'

Rex Jones knows a thing or two about raising sons — he's got three of them — and he's trained them to make an impact on the world for Christ.

The Jones boys — Barrett, 22; Harrison, 20; and Walker, 18 — are all talented football players. Barrett, a graduate student in accounting, is an NCAA unanimous all-American lineman for the University of Alabama who, in the past year, has won both the Wuerffel Award for combining exemplary community service with athletic and academic achievement and the Outland Trophy for being the best college football interior lineman. Harrison is an upcoming junior at Alabama and plays as a tight end for the Crimson Tide. Walker, a rising senior at Evangelical Christian School in Cordova, Tenn., is on his high school football team and plans to play college football like his brothers.

Early in their marriage, Rex, director of advancement at Evangelical Christian School, and his wife, Leslie, decided to be "intentional" in their style of parenting and raise their sons with a clear focus on Christ. They wanted "to teach and train these kids to be a resource to the world," Rex said.

"The world needs Christian men leaders," he continued. "I don't know that they'll be pastors or missionaries, but the world needs good Christian lawyers and doctors and dentists and people who are in professions that can influence people."

The Jones boys have accepted their father's challenge. Barrett has led three missions trips during his spring breaks from college; two of them included his entire family. The Joneses returned from a week-long missions trip to Nicaragua in March (see story in the April 5 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* or online at www.thealabamabaptist.org).

During that trip, Rex encouraged Barrett to take the leadership role for the team of about 30. He urged all three of his sons to disciple their friends on the trip.

Barrett understands the value of participating in missions and the importance of encouraging others to get involved.

"Missions is something that's extremely important to the Christian community because God is so much bigger than just America — He's a global God," he said.

"We can only [reach] so many people," Rex said. "But if we train other people to [reach] people, then it becomes exponential."

Rex also sees the family's missions trips as a time to expand the vision for missions. He challenges participants "not only to experience serving on these missions trips, but to have a goal in their lifetime ... to be able to do the same thing with their families."

His hope is that each of the 30 people on the trip will go on a future missions trip and take 30 of their friends.

"That would be 900 people around the world that God could use to make a difference, and that's our goal."

Barrett, Harrison and Walker each use



BP photo

MINISTERING TOGETHER — Father-and-son duo Rex (right) and Barrett Jones visit with a group of school children in Jinotega, Nicaragua. Throughout the trip, Rex helped his three sons as they ministered to those around them.

football to share Christ's love with their teammates and the spectators.

"Obviously sports are for fun — that's why I do them — but also you can have a great influence on others," Walker said. "As we've seen with Barrett, really it's given him a pedestal to be able to share the gospel and share his faith, and that allows people to watch him more closely. I believe that if you take that opportunity and you make the most of it, then that can really change people for Christ."

Rex says despite Barrett's fame, the Jones family keeps him grounded.

"He has two brothers and a mom and a dad who work really hard to keep him humble, and we have fun doing that," Rex said with a smile. "It's a great love that we have for each other. I challenge him to maximize his time to be able to use it wisely to do what God is wanting him to do."

The Jones brothers are appreciative of their father's leadership, character and influence as a Christian role model in their lives.

"He's a picture of Christ for me," Harrison said.

"He's taught me everything that I think I want to teach my kids one day." (BP)

Father's Day is Sunday, June 17.

"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him."
Psalm 103:13

"The world needs Christian men leaders. I don't know that they'll be pastors or missionaries, but the world needs good Christian lawyers and doctors and dentists and people who are in professions that can influence people."

Churches, associations prep for 'real' missions partnership

(continued from page 1)

Alabama serving through the International Mission Board (IMB) and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) will provide the missions field connection. And Alabama Baptist churches and associations will organize the volunteers.

"The great thing is you don't have to be a large church to be a part of this new paradigm. It's a fit for churches of all sizes," said Reggie Quimby, director of the SBOM office of global missions. "One church or association will serve as the hub, or connector, like Colbert-Lauderdale Association is doing, and the others will be in the network working through the connector. All of them together will support the missions strategy."

It's a natural fit, Akers said.

"There's a special bond already in place, a connection between the churches and the people to the missionaries from Alabama," he said. "It's a way to relate to that person and the work that person is doing. That person will be coming back for stateside assignment and maintaining a consistent relationship. It's not a one-time opportunity."

Eddy Garner, director of missions for Colbert-Lauderdale Association, agreed.

"I've known Tim and Donna for years. They are homegrown products of the Shoals area," he said.

Because of the relationship, a group from Colbert-Lauderdale Association traveled to Ukraine in 2010 to do missions.

"When we went two years ago, we had such a good time working with Tim and Donna," Garner said. "It was a natural fit to go back and help again. ... When the opportunity came to do the Acts 1:8 partnership and help the Akerses, it was a no-brainer."

"I really like working with missionaries who have ties to our areas," he said. "The potential is really great."

"If we have missionaries from Alabama

who have given their lives to serve the Lord in foreign locations, then we certainly can give money, but we also can encourage and bless them by going, putting feet to our prayers and saying, 'I'm going to get involved with you.'"

Garner and about 10 others from churches in Colbert-Lauderdale Association will officially launch their Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections partnership in September when they travel with Akers, Quimby and Scotty Goldman, associate in the SBOM office of global missions, to the Carpathian Mountains.

While Garner's group will be looking for opportunities to serve, Akers will serve as a guide for the group as well as spend time assessing the area so that he can begin work on a specific missions strategy.

'Looking for churches'

"We will be looking for (existing) churches and believers ... to help start churches ... and to develop leaders in churches ... throughout the mountain range," Akers said.

Also traveling with the group will be SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance; a group from Muscle Shoals Baptist Association; Frank Gingrich, pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Vinemont, in East Cullman Baptist Association; and Randy Makemson, director of missions for East Cullman Baptist Association.

"We are trying to be an Acts 1:8 association," Makemson said, noting the association has partnered with Michigan and with a group in Nicaragua and is interested in expanding its partnership opportunities.

"I'm all for the Acts 1:8 connectivity because it makes me accountable as a leader to help me encourage ... [the] pastors ... to engage in Acts 1:8," he said. "I think ... the concept of connecting with IMB or NAMB missionaries who have Alabama connections strengthens the productivity."

"The spiritual side of it [for the missionaries] is they know they are not just employees," Makemson explained. "They know 'my people, my homefolks, my state convention, my association — they are all with us.'"

"I think great and wonderful things are going to come out of it."

The September trip to the Carpathian

Mountains will be one of the first official vision journeys connected to the new partnership strategy. Registration for this trip is closed, but the other two in 2012 are still open — South America in August and South Asia in October.

"The idea is to get Alabama Baptists on the field with Alabama missionaries to begin to establish personal relationships and ministry relationships," Goldman said. "This will help Alabama Baptists see what kind of needs are there and know how they can be involved."

"This is a real partnership where the involvement goes across several levels and is not just a once-a-year missions trip," he noted.

The partnership is built on a three-legged foundation — prayer, partnerships and people groups.

"Alabama Baptists will connect with Alabama missionaries — whether on the international field or in North America — and be on the ground beside them. They will be praying for them, partnering with them to assist them

with their ministries and working with them to identify unreached, unengaged people groups," Goldman said.

The goal is to connect Alabama Baptist churches with Alabama missionaries serving in each of the nine IMB affinity groups as well as across North America, he said, noting proper protocol is in place to deal with the high security areas.

Akers added, "As the IMB, we have always said we want to personalize missions and for people to be involved personally. ... This offers a connection to the Embrace people group strategy (unveiled by IMB President Tom Elliff during the 2011 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting)."

The Embrace strategy is a way for the 3,800 identified unengaged, unreached people groups around the world to be adopted or "embraced" by Southern Baptist churches by the end of 2012.

"Alabama Baptists would be following in the footsteps of this initiative," Akers said. "We need Alabama Baptists to come help us."

For more information about Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections or to suggest missionaries from Alabama who might welcome this type of partnership, call Quimby (rqimby@alsbom.org) at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 239; Goldman (sgoldman@alsbom.org) at Ext. 387, or Barbara Owen (bowen@alsbom.org) at Ext. 334. ☞



Designed by Lauren C. Grim

Land signs off radio show

Southern Baptists' top moral concerns spokesman told listeners June 2 was his final appearance on the weekly call-in show that sparked recent controversy.

The head of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) signed off without fanfare for the last time on the Richard Land Live! weekly radio show that day.

Richard Land, president of ERLC since 1988, didn't go into detail about the controversy over recent comments about Trayvon Martin and a plagiarism investigation that brought rebuke and a decision to cancel the program by the executive committee of his trustee board.

"Due to a variety of circumstances this will be my last appearance on Richard Land Live!," Land said in the closing moments of a previously recorded broadcast without the usual listener calls. "I have thoroughly enjoyed my more than decade-long ... conversation with you. I still believe America ... must have a spiritual revival followed by a spiritual awakening culminating in a spiritual reformation." (ABP)



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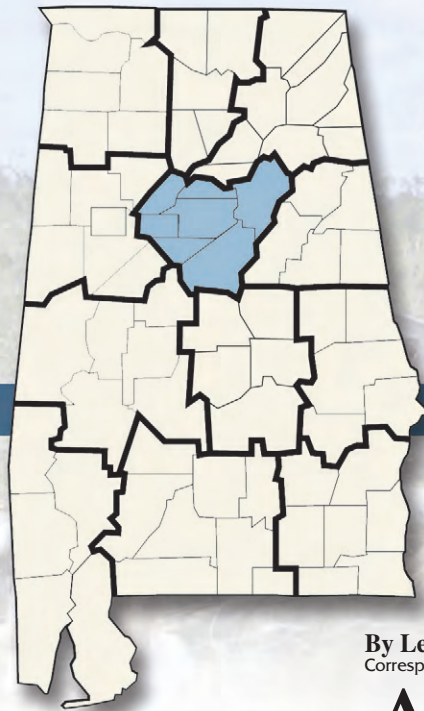
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Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April 2011 tornadoes

Recovery, renewal continues in central Alabama

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

April 27, 2011, began quietly as most spring days do. But by about 6 a.m. it became apparent that this would be no ordinary day.

In fact, as more hours ticked by, the worse the situation grew.

More than 60 tornadoes traversed Alabama that day.

More than 40 of the state's 67 counties suffered damage, if not complete devastation.

The storms' ravages claimed more than 240 lives in Alabama.

Thousands upon thousands were left homeless and broken in spirit.

The day became the deadliest 24-hour period for tornadoes since March 18, 1925, when 747 people were killed by tornadoes.

By the end of the day Alabama had earned the top rank on the National Climatic Data Center's lists for number of tornadoes in 2011, for tornado activity January through May and for tornado activity in April alone.

In the Alabama Baptist's Associational District 11 portion of the state 36 people died, according to news reports.

Though the experience of April 2011 was heartbreaking, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley said it did accomplish one thing — it prepared the state for this hurricane season, which opened June 1.

"We learned a lot. Nothing prepares you like real life," Bentley said in a June 2 article on al.com.

Bessemer Association

In Bessemer Baptist Association, "we did have massive damage," said Rick Cato, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove.

He said approximately 800 homes were damaged or destroyed in Pleasant Grove, while another 200 to 300 were affected in Concord.

One church in the association, Concord Highland Baptist Church, Concord, was destroyed.

"We had needs of every description," Cato said of the area encompassed by Bessemer Association.

Forty families of Bethel Baptist lost their homes, he said. That



Photo by Lindsey Robinson

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY — Mud Creek Baptist Association volunteers provide a visible presence near Concord with their tent offering free snacks and cold drinks.

equated to one-quarter to one-third of the families in the church.

The church worked to make certain these families had temporary housing, financial relief and basic needs and offered other assistance

such as debris removal and clean-up.

To aid others affected by the storms, Bethel's gymnasium was open around the clock for 17 days. Cato estimated volunteers served

35,000 meals. During those days, the people in need were given food, necessities and 45 tons of ice.

"We had a shower trailer [from the Alabama Baptist State Board of

(See 'Volunteers,' page 6)

District 11

North Jefferson Association

St. Clair Association

Shelby Association

Bessemer Association

Mud Creek Association

Sulphur Springs Association

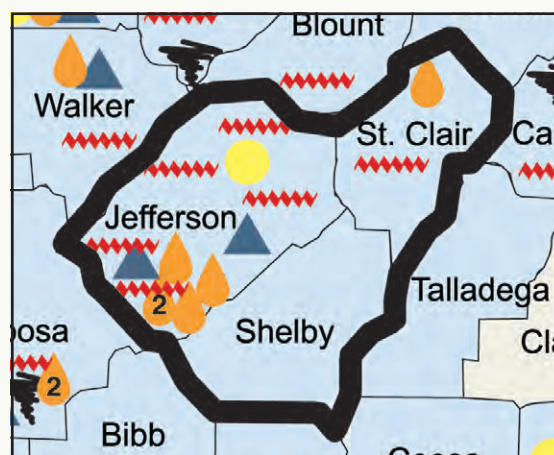
Birmingham Association

Explanation of districts

Alabama's 75 associations are grouped into 12 geographical districts. The districts allow the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions to work with and offer resources in a more localized way. Each district has various state missionaries assigned to it. When there are meetings or workshops that need to take place with all associational leaders, the district set-up allows for a more practical model for those events. The April 27, 2011, tornadoes and resulting damage is a prime example of how having the 12 districts allowed for immediate strategizing and organization on the state and associational level. *The Alabama Baptist* has been highlighting storm recovery and relief assistance in each of the 12 districts over the past year. Next month's feature will complete the coverage.

Highlights from District 11

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



6 of the 7 associations (3 counties) have Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts focused on them.

2 on-site command centers were set up immediately following the tornado damage.

1 state feeding unit was set up to help the numerous local units.

5 shower unit locations were brought in during the first few weeks (locations where units traded out noted by numbers).

Volunteers from churches, associations help

(continued from page 5)

of Missions (SBOM)]” for use by Bessemer Association, Cato said. Two laundry trailers were also provided by First Baptist Church, Satsuma, and the SBOM.

The churches of the association worked together to minister in Concord, Edgewater and McDonald’s Chapel. Some — such as Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer; Grace Life Baptist Church, Bessemer; and Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla — provided workers to help in Bethel’s gym. Others — such as Bessemer Association’s disaster relief team and volunteers from churches — provided manpower in the communities and housed volunteers. North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown, was one such church. Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, also offered clothing and basic supplies to individuals in need.

Churches also donated money, food, diesel fuel and necessities.

As long as two months after the storms, Bessemer Association was still seeing scores of volunteers coming to the area. Cato estimates 5,000 to 6,000 volunteers worked through Bethel.

“The outpouring was just incredible,” he said.

Cato noted that the churches of Bessemer Association pulled together and worked diligently even though they did not have a permanent director of missions (DOM) to lead them at that time.

Rebuilding has begun, which has brought other volunteers to Pleasant Grove.

“It was unreal how many people [have] come,” Cato said.

Volunteers have come from the Birmingham metro area, as well as Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio and Arizona, among other places.

Already 130 to 140 homes have been rebuilt in Pleasant Grove and many others have been repaired, Cato said.

He also said Bethel participated in five or six of the reconstruction projects. In addition, the church is working with several nonprofit groups that are assisting in the rebuilding phase.

Even now, Concord High-



Photo by Leigh Pritchett

HELPING OTHERS IN A TIME OF CRISIS — Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville, in St. Clair Baptist Association sustained heavy damage from the April 27, 2011, tornadoes that hit the area.

land Baptist is being reconstructed. “Pleasant Grove has still got a ways to go,” Cato said, referring to reconstruction and follow-up counseling.

Through this disaster, Cato said he believes the people in need have come to understand that much of the response — in the form of money, supplies and volunteers — has come from Christians. This has generated opportunities for people to realize their need for Jesus Christ in their lives. In fact, Cato said his church has witnessed two baptisms of people who were aided after the storms.

Birmingham Association

Lives were lost April 27, 2011, when Pleasant Grove and Pratt City suffered significant tornado damage.

Fultondale and Cahaba Heights also felt the storms’ wrath, said Mike McLemore, executive director for Birmingham Baptist Association.

McLemore said First Baptist Church, Fultondale, and First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, also took blows in the storms.

Birmingham Association’s disaster relief volunteers dispatched quickly, he said, setting up its feeding unit at Fair Park to provide meals for those affected by the storms and for the many helpers.

“Every team we had was dispatched,” McLemore said of the association’s disaster relief volunteers.

Birmingham Association worked with SBOM, Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency, Red Cross and Salvation Army to feed and shelter people and to provide necessities.

“We had multitudes of churches and other agencies that helped provide water and supplies” to people in need, McLemore said.

Several association churches — such as Central Park Baptist Church, Birmingham — offered their facilities to lodge volunteers. Others — such as Westmont Baptist Church, Birmingham, and First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove — served meals to volunteers.

The shower unit from St. Clair Baptist Association was made available. Other disaster relief assistance arrived from various locations in Alabama, such as Mobile and Montgomery. McLemore said volunteers came from nine states, some as far away as Utah.

The Mormons assisted with cleanup and donated supplies.

For three to four months, there was a “constant flow” of volunteers into the area, McLemore recalled.

To help Federal Emergency Management Agency families get resettled, the group Restoring Hope was formed. McLemore described it as a collaboration of the faith community to address not only spiritual needs, but also any material needs that still exist.

The group’s work is continuing even after a year.

McLemore said teams from South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Oklahoma, as well as from Samaritan’s Purse International Relief, have given their time to rebuild in the association.

So far, 250 to 300 homes have been reconstructed, he estimated. While Birmingham Association has been involved in all the projects, it has actually helped to build 10 homes.

McLemore said Metro Changers, the association’s housing rehabilitation ministry, has participated in repairing and rebuilding homes.

More missions teams are scheduled to work in the association this summer to construct houses and repair churches.

Eight churches in Birmingham Association have partnered with churches of other denominations to help rebuild or repair their structures, McLemore said. This includes The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham; Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham; Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham; Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills; Vestavia Hills Baptist Church; Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover; Shades Crest Baptist Church, Hoover; and Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Trussville.

In general, McLemore said Birmingham Association churches have attended to needs in the communities as they have become aware of them.

As Christians have ministered through the crisis, some individuals on the receiving end

of the compassion have realized their need for forgiveness and have asked Jesus Christ to be their Savior, McLemore said.

Even though progress has been made in getting lives back to normal, Birmingham Association still needs funds for assisting people and individuals to volunteer for Restoring Hope.

Birmingham Association had even more destruction in January 2012, when a tornado ripped through Center Point, Deerfoot, Clay and Clayridge. McLemore said more than 100 homes were affected in that storm.

Once again the disaster relief volunteers were dispatched. In addition, First Baptist Church, Center Point; Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point; Clearview Baptist Church, Pinson; NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville; Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville; Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay; and Chalkville First Baptist Church, Birmingham, offered shelter, food and additional support.

Mud Creek Association

As soon as the storms subsided, Mud Creek Baptist Association volunteers drove through affected areas to deliver food and find out the needs of individuals, said Ken Maddox, DOM for Mud Creek Baptist Association.

The efforts of Mud Creek Association focused mainly on its neighbors — Pleasant Grove and Concord. Maddox said both Pleasant Grove and Concord are situated a few miles from the association office.

One Mud Creek Association church also served in the Brookwood area.

Mud Creek Association lent a hand by setting up a tent in Concord to provide food and resources.

Combining their efforts, Mud Creek Association assisted Birmingham Association in food preparation and distribution, Maddox said.

Madison Baptist Association joined the relief efforts by providing a temporary shower unit in the area.

Mud Creek Association is made up of 21 mostly smaller-membership churches. Only

“I think all of our churches engaged in some way. I can’t think of a single church that wasn’t involved.”

How to assist in relief efforts

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

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

To contact specific associations, call:

▶ Bessemer Baptist Association, 205-428-2451;

▶ Birmingham Baptist Association, 205-599-3245;

▶ Mud Creek Baptist Association, 205-491-8350;

▶ North Jefferson Baptist Association, 205-631-4126;

▶ Shelby Baptist Association, 205-669-7858;

▶ St. Clair Baptist Association, 205-594-5173; or

▶ Sulphur Springs Baptist Association, www.sldr.org. (TAB)

rebuild homes, lives in Alabama's District 11

three of them have full-time pastors. Nonetheless, Maddox said every church served those in need.

"I think all of our churches engaged in some way," he said. "I can't think of a single church that wasn't involved."

Some churches met specific needs that came to their attention, while others volunteered, donated supplies and gave money.

Members of Big Creek Baptist Church, Adger, went to First, Pleasant Grove, to give workers there a break in preparing meals, Maddox said. Crossroad Baptist Church, Hueytown, aided storm survivors in Pratt City by preparing and providing food.

Then in January 2012 people of the association rose to action again after a tornado struck in Smithville. Maddox said many supplies were offered and volunteers responded to help in that area.

Smithville Baptist Church, Bessemer, became the hub for relief efforts. Volunteers descended upon the church quickly. Thanks to their efforts, that area looked significantly better within two weeks, Maddox noted.

Being in a disaster is "a numbing time" for those directly affected, Maddox said. However, through the efforts of volunteers expressing love in that difficult time, people came to ask Jesus Christ to be their Savior.

North Jefferson Association

The path of the storms mainly ran south and north of North Jefferson Baptist Association, said DOM Steve Loggins.

"We did not as an association sustain the damage" of some others, he said.

Just the same, two of its churches suffered harm. North Highland Baptist Church, Warrior, was damaged by straight-line winds, while Black Creek Baptist Church, Birmingham, took a blow from an afternoon tornado system.

North Jefferson Association was primarily involved in cleanup and recovery.

"Our churches mobilized to help," Loggins said.

Gardendale First Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Mount Olive, became collection and distribution centers. Many other churches addressed needs within their communities and in other locations.

"Everybody pitched in," Loggins said.

Even though North Highland Baptist was damaged, the members served meals at a Federal Emergency Management Agency site in Warrior for weeks.

High Point Community Church, Empire, transported supplies from the North Jefferson Association office to Walker County.

Baptist associations joined forces to multiply results. North Jefferson Association sent a generator to Sulphur Springs Baptist Association to use in efforts there, while Baldwin Baptist Association and teams from other states came into North Jefferson Association to offer further assistance.

Loggins helped in Fultondale as well as in Bessemer Association. He was previously on staff at Concord Highland Baptist in Bessemer Association.

Upon seeing the destruction in that area, Loggins said he almost had a sense of "survivor's guilt."

In September, North Jefferson Association will continue its assistance by going on a missions trip to Phil Campbell to help with rebuilding efforts there.

"We found out how ill-prepared we were for disaster," Loggins said after the April 2011 storms. "We were better prepared when the tornadoes hit in January this year."

During the January storm, the associa-

tion's Clay Baptist Church was damaged.

Loggins said North Jefferson Association has focused on preparation for a future disaster, one that volunteers hope will never come.

Shelby Association

On the morning of April 27, 2011, tornadoes went through the northern part of Shelby County. Fortunately the damage "was limited in its scope," said Hugh Richardson, DOM for Shelby Baptist Association.

The association's disaster relief team responded when it learned of the damage that had occurred.

Most of the association's efforts, however, were concentrated elsewhere. Numerous churches — both small and large — responded in Tuscaloosa, Rainsville, Hackleburg, Pleasant Grove and Pratt City.

"The churches were self-deploying," Richardson explained. "They were self-motivating."

They sent out teams of volunteers, took food into damaged areas and collected necessities, among other things.

Some disaster relief volunteers were deployed to locations by the SBOM during that time.

Shelby Association received money from donations and forwarded it to the SBOM, Richardson said.

Richardson himself spent five days as a chaplain in Tuscaloosa. Some staff members also served in Rainsville, Fultondale, Pratt City and other places.

As for the mission of helping areas to rebuild, Richardson said the churches primarily have responded and the association gave assistance where needed. Richardson has acted as a liaison to connect volunteers and businesses with areas of need and channeled resources when they became available.

This summer a team of 30 Shelby Baptist Builders for Christ will work on reconstructing Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, in Franklin Baptist Association. Teams from North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, and Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, also will aid in the reconstruction.

While Shelby Association has more than 300 trained disaster relief volunteers, there continues to be a desire among association members to be trained and ready for the next crisis.

As a result, First Baptist Church, Alabaster, and Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, have hosted training sessions. At these sessions, Sid Nichols, DOM of Calhoun Baptist Association, which experienced much devastation on April 27, 2011, spoke to Shelby pastors about lessons he has learned.

St. Clair Association

St. Clair Baptist Association endured a double wave of storms on April 27, 2011.

That morning, straight-line winds swept through parts of the county, damaging hundreds of structures in Moody and Pell City.

Ben Chandler, DOM for St. Clair Association, said First Baptist Church, Moody, and First Baptist Church, Pell City, were damaged in that system.

"Then the tornado touched down in the late afternoon and destroyed 12 miles of property in Shoal Creek Valley," Chandler said. Thirteen people were killed and countless houses were destroyed.

Bethany Missionary Baptist Church, Ashville, and Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville, both sustained heavy damage during that time.

The day's storm systems left Piney Grove Baptist Church, Ashville, and Oak Grove #2 Baptist Church, Ragland, with injuries as well.

Some of the association's disaster relief volunteers worked in Moody. Others toiled through the night in Shoal Creek Valley, clearing a path for medical evacuation.

"Many of us were without power or phone and did not know the seriousness of the situation in Shoal Creek until midmorning of [April] 28," Chandler explained.

Chandler said help arrived fairly quickly from across the state, including from Coosa River Baptist Association.

A command center was established on the property of Bethany Missionary Baptist, while neighboring Greensport Baptist served as a Federal Emergency Management Agency site.

Ashville Middle School and First Baptist Church, Ashville, offered food, shelter and supplies. The SBOM provided funding for feeding volunteers with other donations coming from companies and individuals.

A massive cleaning effort ensued, clearing the way for homes to be rebuilt. Teams from across the nation joined in construction.

St. Clair Association hosted teams from Pinson, Clay, Opelika, South Carolina and Indiana, among other places, Chandler said.

The association has a partnership with Orchard Hills Baptist Church, Novi, Mich., which sent a team to Alabama to assist its partner church during this difficult time.

In addition, Chandler said the association received \$70,000-\$80,000 in monetary donations from multiple sources.

"That doesn't count the clothes, blankets, gasoline, etc." that were given, Chandler said. "We tried to use that money to fill in the gaps for people."

Extreme Ministries teamed with St. Clair Association to rebuild some homes in the valley and to repair others, Chandler said. The association also worked with Greensport to build a house.

The circumstances that brought the outpouring from so many sources was indeed saddening. However, Chandler said he was struck by the compassion, "the resilience of people and willingness to help others in a crisis" that he witnessed.

"[There was a] unity in the community, a spirit of cooperation as never seen before throughout the county," he said. "[There was] a greater understanding of the needs of the

county [and] a greater love for each other."

The main thrust of assistance began to wind down in November 2011. However, Chandler said there are still areas of need that are being addressed by local churches.

Sulphur Springs Association

Several communities within the parameters of Sulphur Springs Baptist Association were affected by the April 2011 tornadoes, according to Andy Frazier, who was DOM for Sulphur Springs Association until January 2012. Two lives were lost and many homes were damaged.

Harmony Baptist Church, Empire, received damage from the tornadoes.

The first weekend after the storms, volunteers from Sulphur Springs Association turned out in great number.

Chris Wilson, chairman of the association's missions committee and pastor of New Temple Baptist Church, Dora, said there almost were not enough places to send all the helpers.

Churches in Sulphur Springs Association — 22 of the 24 churches have bivocational pastors — distributed meals in Argo, Sipsey and Bremen before other relief agencies arrived.

"The first boots on the ground were churches in our association," Frazier said. "All of the churches in our association were quick to respond to needs."

Sulphur Springs Association mainly focused its assistance and recovery efforts in the Argo/Sipsey area and Bremen, said Frazier, who now serves as lead pastor of Crosstown Community Church, Sumiton.

Pisgah Baptist Church, Jasper, became a relief station, spearheading efforts in the Argo/Sipsey area. Bobby Sanders, Pisgah Baptist youth director, said members were cutting trees, getting people to safety and putting tarps on roofs, among other things. The Saturday after the storms, more than 200 volunteers came to Sipsey to work.

And out of the church came Restore Sipsey Co-op, a nonprofit entity formed to construct homes for people. It was called a cooperative because it involved different denominations — Baptist, Church of Christ, Methodist and Lutheran.

Philadelphia Baptist Church, Jasper, in Walker Baptist Association; New Canaan Baptist Church, Empire, in Sulphur Springs Association; and Abundant Life Church of God, Piney Woods, were among the groups that assisted in providing food for the community.

New Temple Baptist and Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, also served as drop-off points. Many churches in the association offered assistance in this effort.

Shelby Association came to the aid of Sulphur Springs Association, as did a group from Florida, Wilson said.

The sanctuary of Antioch Baptist Church, Bremen, was significantly damaged. Sulphur Springs Association provided assistance through funds and volunteers to help rebuild it, Frazier added.

"The first boots on the ground were churches in our association. All of the churches in our association were quick to respond to needs."

Finding Jesus in midst of crisis

A word or a deed done in the name of Jesus Christ can bring about a change in the life of someone in crisis.

This is something that Brad Moseley — pastor of First Baptist Church, Moody — witnessed after the April 2011 storms.

When volunteers from his church refurbished the roof system on one of the hard-

est-hit houses in that area, the homeowner asked Jesus into his heart.

At another time, a man who had volunteered during the relief effort came to a church service at First, Moody. He asked Jesus to be his Savior and, subsequently, so did the rest of his family. That man in turn led his brother to the saving knowledge of Jesus, Moseley said. (TAB)

Joining together

Churches in St. Clair Association meet physical, spiritual, emotional needs in their county

The storms that hit St. Clair County on April 27, 2011, left plenty of needs and work in their wake.

St. Clair Baptist Association churches realized that and each assumed a role in assisting.

Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Association, said he could not think of a congregation in the association that did not help in some way.

Here is a sampling of what the churches and their members did:

Edwin Talley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ragland, and fellow volunteers spent the morning putting tarps on roofs after the first storm system came through that area. Next came the task of preparing the church to open as a shelter. As night fell, Talley and his wife, Teresa, were dispatched to Shoal Creek Valley, where a deadly tornado had struck.

St. Clair Association's disaster relief volunteers worked all night, cutting a path so that help could get into the valley.

The Talleys were in vehicles right behind them, shuttling emergency medical personnel into the valley and evacuating the injured out to a triage area.

In the days that followed, the Talleys' church housed volunteers and St. Clair Association's shower unit accommodated them. Talley said many of the church's members aided in Shoal Creek Valley.

First Baptist Church, Ashville, was also attending to Shoal Creek Valley residents.

Ashville Middle School principal Phillip Johnson opened the school as an emergency shelter, feeding station and distribution center. When First Baptist, Ashville, learned of this, "we joined with him," Pastor James Sampley said.

Sampley said the church helped to make sandwiches and hot meals and developed six

routes for delivering them to residents, utility workers and volunteers in the valley.

When school resumed, the distribution center was moved to three different places and the food service portion relocated to First, Ashville.

Locally, volunteers came from St. Clair Association; First Baptist Church, Trussville, in Birmingham Baptist Association; and Clay. Some volunteers came from as far as Mississippi and Georgia to join in the effort.

"We had a lot of people involved in this ministry," Sampley said. This included his wife, Judy, who coordinated meals for the relief effort. For more than two weeks, Sampley estimated as many as 750 meals a day were being prepared. Sampley said the amount of supplies and donations given show "how good Alabamians can be in time of trouble."

The Gallant community, for example, held a fundraiser in which First Baptist Church, Gallant, in Etowah Baptist Association was instrumental.

After initial relief was no longer needed, First Baptist, Gallant, focused on follow-up, repairs and reconstruction. Using funds sent to or given by First, Ashville, they were able to assist with such needs as cabinets, siding, decks and mobile home setup.

Community effort

CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville, in St. Clair Association and Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, in Birmingham Association were among those offering assistance, Sampley said.

In addition, Sampley said First, Ashville, teamed with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and the WMU Foundation to provide a specially designed storm shelter for a handicapped person.

Greensport's spirit, determination not broken

On April 27, 2011, Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville, in St. Clair Baptist Association sustained about \$200,000 in damage, said Pastor Marlin Cox.

Tornadic activity caused the sanctuary roof to shift, the steeple to relocate and the pull-through in front of the fellowship hall to fly into the woods behind the building, he said.

Yet even though the church building was broken, the spirit and determination of the congregants was not. They ministered in the community, working to clean up properties and to assist those in need, Cox said. He estimated church members were involved in helping in the community for about a year.

"Our people helped clean up property," Cox continued. "Some of our people helped with rebuilding houses for people."

First, Ashville, continues to assist people in recovering from the storm.

So do Pastor Brad Moseley and his church, First Baptist Church, Moody.

First, Moody, suffered about half-a-million dollars in damage during the morning storm, Moseley said.

Even so, Moseley and his church did not worry. Instead they took care of the needs in that part of the county, allowing other resources and helpers to concentrate on Shoal Creek Valley, Chandler said.

"We organized all the chain saw, recovery crews, all the teams that came in," Moseley said.

In the first five days after the storms, Mose-

ley said First, Moody, organized 16,000 man hours of disaster relief. The volunteers were from First, Moody; St. Clair County; Indiana and Michigan.

Last summer, First, Moody, assisted in roofing two houses in Moody and several in Shoal Creek Valley through Extreme Ministries. Additionally, the church participated in rebuilding a home in Shoal Creek.

In February 2012, the church aided in landscaping three yards and rebuilding decks through the Word of Life Ministries' City Shock project. Moseley said 30 minutes after the first wave of storms, the church began ministering to those affected and "it really hasn't stopped yet." (TAB)

Crossroad Baptist serves as distribution center

On April 27, 2011, Concord resident Jason Green watched a tornado touch down a few hundred feet from his house.

As soon as it was safe, Green and his wife, Kristen, went to check on other families.

The next day, food, resources and funds to aid those in need began appearing.

Within a very short span, the church where Green is associate pastor and student minister — Crossroad Baptist Church, Hueytown, in Mud Creek Baptist Association — became a distribution center.

"We found people all over who were looking to send supplies and materials," Green said. By the same token, he said the church received calls from around the state "begging for assistance they weren't getting."

Men with trucks and trailers consistently pulled into the churchyard either to unload supplies or to load them to transport to areas of need.

The volunteers were amazed at what they saw happening, Green explained.

Deliveries came from Kentucky, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Montana, Massachusetts, Ohio, South Carolina and Missouri, among other places.

The effort began in the church's fellowship hall but was soon moved to the more spacious gymnasium.

Green estimated roughly 75 to 100 Crossroad members, in addition to volunteers

from other denominations, kept the center open 15 to 20 hours a day.

Local restaurants, as well as Coca-Cola and Buffalo Rock, saw that volunteers had meals and drinks.

Families from Pratt City, McDonald's Chapel and other places sought aid at the church daily. Some of those seeking assistance asked Jesus Christ to be their Savior.

The primary focus of relief was the local community — Concord and Pleasant Grove, for example. But assistance also went to Cordova, Henagar, Phil Campbell, Hackleburg, Brookwood, Holt, Pratt City, Cullman, McDonald's Chapel and others.

In all, needed items were sent into 14 communities in the state during the 12-week period that Crossroad organized the effort. Some items were also sent to Joplin, Mo., after a deadly tornado struck in May 2011.

The time from receiving to distributing items was very short, Green added.

"We really did not have anything sit a long time," he said. "We made sure it got into the hands of people who needed it."

Every age group of the church pitched in, becoming the hands and feet of Jesus.

"I'm very thankful for the support our church family provided," Green said. "We became more than just church members. We became family." (TAB)

Extreme Ministries uses construction as tool to reach people in St. Clair County

Build. Evangelize. Disciple.

Those are the facets of a construction ministry, according to Jeff Huey, president and founder of Extreme Ministries.

Construction first addresses an immediate need for a person whose home has been damaged or destroyed. It also provides an opportunity for that person to hear about and receive the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Finally, construction is an avenue for discipling the volunteers.

"We use construction as a tool to reach the person and to disciple the people there," Huey said. "We do a lot of construction."

After tornadoes ripped through St. Clair County's Shoal Creek Valley in April 2011, Huey said "the Lord just laid it on my heart" to assist in rebuilding.

He worked with St. Clair Baptist Association and 150 to 200 volunteers a week to repair or rebuild homes.

Volunteers came from Pennsylvania, Texas, Florida and numerous other places week after week, Huey said.

Many churches in St. Clair Association were involved as well, said Director of Missions Ben Chandler. He named one church after the other, finally saying, "I could go on and on. I'm not

sure there isn't a church that didn't get involved in some way."

The volume of callers offering assistance grew to be so great that Huey's church — First Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association — assumed the task of scheduling helpers.

A feeding unit from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions served meals to volunteers for three weeks and Ragland High School housed the workers, Huey said.

"I was in the valley every day from April 27 to October," he said.

In all, Huey's ministry and volunteers were involved in 28 projects to repair or rebuild in Moody, Ragland and Shoal Creek Valley.

Huey said four people who were affected by the storms came to ask Jesus Christ to be their Savior, as did 10 individuals who came to volunteer.

"All the glory" for everything that was accomplished "goes to God" and God alone, he said. While many homes in those areas and in the state have been rebuilt or repaired, Huey said he knows that there continue to be needs in those respects. "I still have people calling me," he said. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Jeff Huey

North Jefferson Assoc. churches collect items

It just happened.”

Mark Harrison, executive pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church in North Jefferson Baptist Association, said that is how the church came to operate a distribution center 12 hours a day for 28 days following the April 2011 tornadoes.

“We just got together as a church” and decided to do something, Harrison said.

People gathered supplies and took them to the church’s south campus, where its family life center is located.

Gardendale First Baptist rented four trucks, loaded them with donated items and sent them into hard-hit areas. Such areas included Cullman, Hartselle, Dora, Sipse, Pleasant Grove, Hackleburg, Phil Campbell, Hanceville and Smithville.

Then the unexpected occurred at First Baptist Church, Mount Olive, in North Jefferson Association after members decided to collect items for storm-impacted areas.

‘God just sent us a truck’

“We started out [with] an in-church collection,” explained Scott Harmon, minister of education and administration for First, Mount Olive.

But after the first day of the ingathering, an 18-wheeler full of items pulled into the church parking lot.

“We didn’t solicit it,” Harmon noted. “God just sent us a truck!”

Harmon said a radio station in Birmingham announced that the church needed assistance to unload the truck and strangers just showed up to help.

The items accumulated were then distributed to Pleasant Grove, Cullman and other places.

First, Mount Olive, has a connection with St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church, Pratt City, where some supplies were taken to be distributed in the community. St. Luke Missionary Baptist also informed First, Mount Olive, of other needs in the community.

Both churches — Gardendale First and First, Mount Olive — assisted their communities in other ways.

Harrison said Gardendale First partnered with Samaritan’s Purse International Relief, Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department, Iron Man Ministries and the Red Cross to get water, snacks and supplies into areas.

For several days, Gardendale First provided meals to a Smithville nursing home that was without electricity.

Harrison said helpers from the church also assisted in cleanup in Fultondale, Pleasant Grove, Argo, Cullman and Smithville.

Volunteers from First, Mount Olive, completed chain saw and cleanup tasks in Pratt City and McDonald’s Chapel. Harmon said a few members returned to Pratt City several times to work on their own.

In June, some members of Gardendale First will team with Builders for Christ to rebuild Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, in Franklin Baptist Association. Another team will possibly go in September. (TAB)

Churches in Birmingham Association join disaster relief efforts in their communities

On the evening of April 27, 2011, “a lot of people were in our church basement” during a tornado, said C.B. Scott, pastor of Westmont Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association.

After seeing the destruction, some church members emptied their freezers and took the contents to the church. There, volunteers grilled food and announced “free food” on the church’s sign.

Then the church began to prepare food and take it into Pleasant Grove, McDonald’s Chapel and Pratt City to feed volunteers and people affected by the storms, Scott said.

The church also prepared food boxes to deliver in the community.

While all these activities were transpiring, a representative of the Presbyterian Church in America’s (PCA) disaster relief asked if the group could work out of Westmont.

In addition, “people heard about us on the Internet,” Scott continued. “People started sending us money.”

The church set up a special account for that money and established a disaster relief center that became a cooperative effort of Birmingham Association and the PCA.

Hackleburg was also a recipient of some of the aid given through Westmont.

Before long the church was serving 400 meals a day, Scott estimated.

The following churches joined the effort: First Baptist Church, Pelham; Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Birmingham; Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church, Birmingham; and Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church, Pleasant Grove. A church from Chilton County and one from Montgomery also aided relief efforts.

First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla., and Clemson Presbyterian Church, Clemson, S.C., assisted in rebuilding houses, Scott said.

More volunteers came from Nashville and Washington state, among other places.

“I don’t know where all we had teams from,” Scott said. “They just started coming.”



Photo by Adrianna Anderson

UNIQUE MINISTRY — Volunteers from across the state work in the parking lot of Westmont Baptist Church, Birmingham, to assemble and deliver storage units for tornado survivors to have a place to store their salvageable belongings.

Many volunteers lodged in Westmont’s family life center. To accommodate them, Birmingham Association’s shower unit “stayed here for months,” Scott said. “The Birmingham Association sent food and money here constantly.”

Storage sheds

In addition, the church built storage sheds in its parking lot and transported them to sites where homes would be constructed. The sheds gave people a place to store their belongings until their homes were finished.

A total of 22 sheds were constructed.

During this season of helping others weather

a difficult time, Scott said Westmont members of all ages and of varying levels of mobility volunteered.

“It was a great time for this church and a great bonding,” he said.

Many denominations — Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, Church of God, Assembly of God, Church of Christ and Mennonite — worked together in harmony, Scott continued. “I was amazed and humbled in the presence of the Lord.”

It was also a time when some people experienced new life.

“We had people who came to faith during this and joined the church,” Scott said. (TAB)

Mud Creek Association churches respond ‘on-the-spot’

For 35 days, Tom Barry and Billy Swindle manned a tent in Concord, giving out meals, canned food, water, drinks and other supplies to people affected by the late April 2011 storms.

One thing the pair experienced on a daily basis was cooperation among the churches of Mud Creek Baptist Association.

“Every church that I called — every church — responded Johnny-on-the-spot,” said Barry, who is a member of First Baptist Church, Oak Grove, and disaster relief coordinator for Mud Creek Association. “Anything that I asked for, it was there. There was no hesitation.”

Barry said he called a lot of churches and all willingly provided.

People from all over the area gave and people from outside the area gave, he added.

The tent was set up across from Bessemer Baptist Association’s Concord Highland Baptist Church, Hueytown, which was heavily damaged by the storms.

“We kept our tent set up in Concord till the middle of June,” said Ken Maddox, director of missions for Mud Creek Association.

Although the services offered at the tent were a ministry of Mud Creek Association to those in need, the tent also served as a lodging place for some volunteers from Kentucky, who slept there one night.

As many as 400 meals a day were served

out of the tent, Barry estimated. Some meals were delivered into the community.

Sometimes, other helpers assisted Swindle and Barry in the ministry.

“So many people helped,” Barry said of the churches and individuals who gave food, items and their time. “Thank

the Lord for everybody who helped.”

That was not all of Barry’s food service during the recovery process. He also worked 16 days in Birmingham with the Birmingham Baptist Association Loaves and Fishes feeding unit, which he has been associated with since 1998. (TAB)

Volunteers help rebuild Bremen’s Antioch

The one tree standing close to Antioch Baptist Church, Bremen, fell during a morning storm on April 27, 2011.

When it did, it landed on the church’s sanctuary, damaging the structure so badly that it had to be rebuilt, said Pastor Tommy Graves.

“The building was 85 years old,” Graves said.

The Sulphur Springs Baptist Association church was able to salvage the steeple, baptistry, pulpit and pews, which were stored in the fellowship hall that had escaped harm.

With the fellowship hall full of furniture and fixtures, the members of Antioch Baptist had to meet several miles away at Arkadelphia Methodist Church for six to eight weeks.

Then a local plant offered to store the salvaged items, which allowed Antioch’s congregants to meet in their fellowship hall until the sanctuary was completed.

Construction began in June 2011. Within a

week, the structure was framed and “blacked in,” Graves said, noting 100–150 volunteers helped with the rebuilding. They came from Antioch; Northside Baptist Church, Jasper, and First Baptist Church, Jasper, both of which are in Walker Baptist Association; and from Georgia and Kentucky.

Antioch members Steve and Laurita Hogland coordinated the effort.

Churches from Walker Association and West Cullman Baptist Association provided meals for volunteers working on Antioch.

On the fifth Sunday in October, the congregation held its first service in the sanctuary.

The old sanctuary measured 25 feet by 40 feet. The new building is 50 feet by 75 feet and also features three classrooms, a foyer and a sound room. The church — which has an average Sunday attendance of 25 — owes less than \$20,000 on the new building. (TAB)

90 Years from the Beginning

By Susan P. Moore

Seven lots, frontage of more than 350 feet on avenue and a depth of 190 feet to alley in rear. Accommodation for 150 beds. Many private rooms handsomely furnished. Laboratory as good as can be found anywhere. Includes both pathological and x-ray equipment. Thirty rooms with accessory equipment, all that could be desired...Grounds beautiful and restful.

That was the description in 1922 of a farmhouse turned infirmary on Tuscaloosa Avenue that has grown into a 499-bed major medical center – Princeton Baptist Medical Center – and marked the beginning of Baptist Health System.

In her book “The First Fifty,” written to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the System and Princeton Baptist, author Janie Lott wrote: “...we wish those early pioneers could see it today ... born of their vision and their faith to see it through, and carried on by present-day pioneers whose vision and faith look to a future of heretofore undreamed of depth and breadth.”

Now, 40 years past that landmark anniversary, the same can be said. Princeton Baptist and Baptist Health System are still blessed with “present-day pioneers” who continue to bring new, cutting-edge health care to the people of

north and central Alabama. And it is still vision and faith that guide us.

Leading by faith

In January 1922, following a special service at West End Baptist Church, several hundred people traveled just up the street to see this building that was to be the home of the Birmingham Baptist Association’s new ministry of healing. It was the culmination of much hard work and perseverance and the answer to many prayers, as well as an act of faith of a very dedicated group of Baptists.

In fact, when Birmingham Baptist Hospital began operation on January 20, it had 39 patients – and admitted 11 more that day – but not one dollar of operating capital.

Today’s Princeton Baptist and the entire Baptist Health System stand as proof of the faith, vision and generosity of BHS supporters over the past 90 years.

The tradition continues

Just as the leaders of that first Baptist hospital faced challenges but moved forward with faith and confidence, so do those who lead today’s organization. Baptist Health System is among the state’s largest health care systems with 1,080 licensed beds. And as one of Alabama’s largest employers, BHS not only provides employment for approximately 4,300 people, but has been honored as one of the “Best Places to Work” in Birmingham

This year, in addition to opening a \$57 million dollar expansion, Princeton Baptist Medical Center and Baptist Health System are celebrating 90 Years of Medical Ministry.



for the last three consecutive years and as one of the “Best in Alabama” for the last two years. In addition, more than 800 credentialed physicians choose to practice at BHS facilities.

“While this era of health care reform certainly has provided challenges, it is truly a time of great opportunity,” said Princeton Baptist President Betsy Postlethwait. She cites opportunities to work with other providers to shape the transitions of care for patients, to expand key service lines and to clinically integrate with physicians – all while providing care in the most efficient, cost-effective, patient-friendly manner.

Growth to meet community needs

Growth has been characteristic of Baptist Health System throughout its long history.

From a \$75,000 expansion in 1937 that added a new kitchen, a maternity ward and X-ray equipment to the current \$57 million East Expansion, Princeton Baptist has seen many improvements in its 90-year history. In 1966, a major expansion at the hospital added a new north wing that increased the bed count to 427 and relocated the hospital’s main entrance from Tuscaloosa Avenue to Princeton Avenue. This fall the East Expansion will open a new chapter in 21st century health care at Princeton.

Other growth for the System in recent

- 1922** — January 20, Birmingham Baptist Hospital (BBH) opened, establishing the basis for the faith-based Baptist Health System ministry.
- 1930** — BBH leased a second location on Highland Avenue; re-named Highland Avenue Baptist Hospital.
- 1937-38** — A new front was added to BBH to house the laundry, kitchen, maternity department. Cost \$75,000.
- 1951** — Ground-breaking held for a \$1 million, 90-bed BBH East Wing addition; results in demolition of the longstanding pergola and fishpond.
- 1957** — East Wing at BBH was air conditioned.
- 1964** — Construction began on a major expansion and renovation at BBH. It opened in 1966 with a new North Wing, main entrance relocated from Tuscaloosa Ave. to Princeton Ave., and BBH’s first ICU.
- 1967** — The Baptist Hospitals Foundation (now Baptist Health Foundation) was established – one of the earliest hospital foundations in the U.S.
- 1971** — Baptist established a general offices building to house centralized services and an onsite computer was installed to provide a more efficient information system.
- 1978** — Construction began on Princeton Towers, a 12-story residence for seniors. A second Princeton Towers complex opened in 1983.
- 1978** — Approvals granted for a \$22.5 million construction and renovation project at Princeton, including addition of 55 beds.
- 1981** — The cruciform was adopted as the symbol of Baptist Health System.
- 1993** — After several years as an affiliate hospital, Citizens Hospital joins the System as Citizens Baptist Medical Center.
- 1994** — BHS launches a primary care physician network, Baptist Health Centers.
- 1995** — Walker Regional Medical Center, later Walker BMC, became part of BHS.
- 1996** — Citizens of Shelby County voted 2 to 1 for the county’s hospital to become a wholly owned Baptist Medical Center.
- 2005** — Gardner the Pr...

years included the addition of Citizens Baptist Medical Center in 1992, followed by Walker Baptist Medical Center in 1995.

In 1996, residents of Shelby County voted in favor of their local community hospital becoming part of BHS as Shelby Baptist Medical Center. The community's faith in BHS to bring quality care to the area has been well-founded. Today, Shelby Baptist offers a comprehensive range of clinical services and houses one of the state's busiest emergency departments. A \$92 million South Tower expansion completed in 2009 was preceded by major expansions of Shelby's Women's Center and Emergency Department. Highly sophisticated centers of excellence in a number of specialties, including surgery, cardiology, obstetrics/gynecology and more, continue to fulfill the promise of quality care for the community.

Shelby Baptist President David Wilson described the South Tower expansion as "...the biggest single development in the history of health care in Shelby County. The opening of the South Tower began a whole new era in health care for our surrounding communities."

Continuing commitment
Baptist Health System's longstanding commitment to the communities it serves is as strong as ever. It is evident in the bricks and mortar changes underway at Princeton, but also in quality and technology improvements taking place across the System.

The implementation of Epic, a new electronic medical record system, will

provide better access and integration of health care delivery, which means improved care for patients. Sophisticated medical technology — such as robotic surgery — along with new programs and services are regularly added. Among the most recent are home infusion and expanded home care services.

As in the early days, partnership with physicians reinforces the System's commitment to quality. For example, the Baptist Physician Alliance is a collaborative effort among physicians and the System to continuing improvements in the quality of patient care.

Since its beginning, BHS has been committed to training health care professionals for the future — nurses, physicians, allied health workers. Today, BHS continues to keep that promise. The result is an outstanding medical residency education program, the first clinical pastoral education program and highly respected clinical education collaborations to train nurses, health care administrators and allied health professionals.

In looking back over 90 years, Shane Spees, BHS president and CEO, applauds what the organization has achieved. "So much has been accomplished; so many patients and families have been helped through this ministry. We have benefited from the dedication of our physicians, the conscientiousness of our employees and the generosity of our donors. Truly, we have been blessed. Yet we will do so much more. We are on a good path and are positioned for even greater success. We look forward to the next 90 years."

BHS "Firsts"

1945 — A new formula room, the first of its kind in the state, was added to the maternity department at Birmingham Baptist Hospital (today's Princeton Baptist Medical Center).

1950 — Pioneering brain surgery was done at BBH on two babies who contracted meningitis shortly after birth. The same year, BBH became the first private hospital in Alabama to do clinical research with Cortisone, an experimental new "wonder drug" at the time.

1951 — Birmingham's first bone bank was set up at BBH.

1954 — BBH purchased the first of its kind electroencephalograph (EEG) machine in Birmingham.

1965 — "Firsts" for this year included:

- first health care system in the U.S. to implement a clinical pastoral education program and student internship;
- one of the first hospitals in the city to desegregate wards; and
- the first multi-channel auto-analyzer in the Southeast was added to Baptist's laboratories, which had pioneered the use of automation.

1966 — First use of electronic monitoring equipment for patient care in an Alabama community hospital was introduced when BBH opens its first intensive care unit.

1968 — BBH acquired the first comprehensive cardio-pulmonary resuscitation unit in the Southeast. And, this year construction began on an eight-story professional office building connected to BBH, the first of its kind in Alabama.

1972 — Princeton Baptist established the Southeast's first Center for Neurological Sciences.

1980 — Princeton Baptist became one of the first hospitals in the state to establish a hospice program.

1981 — Princeton Baptist's cancer program, the only one in an Alabama hospital to have both a cancer registry and a hospice program, was approved by the American College of Surgeons.

1983 — Princeton Baptist was the first community hospital in the area to offer lumpectomy as a treatment option for breast cancer.

1986 — First self-donated bone marrow transplant in Alabama was performed at Princeton Baptist.

1987 — Princeton Baptist initiated Alabama's first comprehensive cancer

screening and early detection program.

1993 — Princeton Baptist was one of only three sites in Alabama selected to participate in the first large-scale prevention trial for prostate cancer.

1996 — BHS became the first health care provider to ever win the Alabama U.S. Senate Productivity and Quality Award when it was selected to receive the award in 1966.

1997 — The state's first videoscopic saphenous vein harvesting was performed at Princeton Baptist.

1999 — Princeton Baptist became the only site in Alabama for angiogenesis, the process of growing new blood vessels.

2003 — Princeton Baptist was the first site in the U.S. to administer in a clinical trial a new genetic medicine designed to regenerate blood vessels in patients with peripheral artery disease.

2004 — Princeton Baptist was the first site in Alabama to install and use the 3T MRI for clinical applications.

2005 — Princeton Baptist was Alabama's first hospital to participate in two investigational studies where medicine may be injected directly into the heart muscle to potentially grow new blood vessels.

2007 — The region's first "top down" mini-maze operation was performed at Shelby Baptist.

2008 — Shelby Baptist installed the first Dual Source CT in Alabama.

2009 — Shelby Baptist opened a new \$92 million South Tower, the largest single project in Shelby County.

2011 — Firsts included:

- first clinically integrated physician network, Baptist Physician Alliance, was formed to help control costs and improve the quality of patient care;
- Citizens, Princeton and Walker Baptist were named among the nation's top performers on key quality measures by The Joint Commission.

- Princeton and Walker Baptist rank among the top hospitals in the Birmingham metro area in U.S. News Media & World Report's 2011-12 "Best Hospitals."
- Business Alabama magazine names Baptist Health System one of the Best Companies to Work for in Alabama.

2012 — Three Baptist Health Center locations earn national recognition for patient-centered medical care practices.



— The Healing Center opened on Princeton campus.

2010 — Construction began on a \$74 million East Expansion Project at Princeton Baptist.

2009 — Shelby Baptist opened a \$92 million South Tower, adding 167,712 square feet and creating an all private patient room hospital.

2012 — BHS patient services expand with new joint ventures in home infusion and home care services.

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Photo courtesy of Norman Lytle
A memorial to honor the Puerto Rican victims and survivors of the 1972 Lod Airport Massacre in Israel is dedicated during a special ceremony May 30 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

LOD MASSACRE

May 30 marks 40 years since deadly attack in Israel

The day was May 30, 1972. A group of Puerto Rican Christians, eager to begin their biblical pilgrimage in the Holy Land, had just landed at Lod Airport (now known as Ben Gurion Airport) near Tel Aviv, Israel.

As the group of about 65 waited to collect their suitcases in the Arrivals Hall near the luggage carousels, three

Japanese men suddenly unleashed a barrage of hand grenades and bullets into the waiting crowd.

The terrorists, who had arrived on the same Air France flight as the Puerto Rican group according to some accounts, were members of the Japanese Red Army. The men had concealed the weapons in their luggage, and once they received their bags they opened fire.

Many reports about the 1972 attack say the men were enlisted by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, director of Shurat HaDin (Israel Law Center), said in a May 28, 2012, article in *The Jerusalem Post* detailing the attack's history that the PFLP first wanted to hijack an El Al Airlines plane, but when they realized that would not be possible, they planned to kill Israelis in a terror attack.

The Puerto Rican tourists, who were allegedly standing closest to the terrorists, lost 17 people from their group that day. Also killed were eight Israelis and one Canadian. A total of 26 people were killed and dozens more were injured and sent to area hospitals.

"There were so many injuries [and] people were taken to hospitals everywhere, so one family member didn't know where another was," recounted Pat Terry, an Alabama Baptist who was serving in Israel that summer through a Baptist Student Union (now Baptist Campus Ministries) missions team.

Norman Lytle, director of Terry's missions team and a missionary with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) living on the Mount of Olives at the time with his family, was asked to deliver a eulogy on the tarmac before the bodies of the 17 Puerto Rican tourists were transferred home on a U.S. Air Force plane.

Lytle recalled reading text from Romans 8:21-39 during his portion of the eulogy.

Lod Massacre Remembrance Day

"Every time I've read that Scripture since then, the image in my mind is standing in front of that group of people," he said.

In 2006, Puerto Rico's government declared May 30 "Lod Massacre Remembrance Day."

This May marked the 40th anniversary of the attack, and a special event was held May 30 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to honor both the victims and survivors (see story, page 13).

During this time of remembrance, a memorial was dedicated with the names of the Lod Massacre victims. One area of this memorial is inscribed with the message: "The memory of these blessed souls remains alive in the hearts of the survivors and in the collective memory of both nations, Puerto Rico and Israel." (*TAB*, other reports contributed)



Designed by Lauren C. Grim

Alabama summer missionaries cared for victims

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

While college students at the University of Alabama, Pat Terry and Gail Hill shared a deep connection to missions work. “I always had thought Gail and I were twins separated by birth because our stories are so similar,” said Terry, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, and professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford University in Birmingham.

Terry, who was drawn to missions at an early age, was appointed as a Baptist Student Union (BSU) (now Baptist Campus Ministries, BCM) summer missionary to Iowa while in college.

Hill, a member of Baptist Church of the Covenant, Birmingham, and a professor of nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s School of Nursing, also felt that same call to missions work at the age of 12. In addition, she developed an interest in Israel at a young age. “Whereas most teenage girls had pictures of movie stars and rock stars [on their walls], I had maps of Israel,” she laughed.

Hill said she never imagined that she would actually serve in the country. “My father had died when I was very young and my mother was raising two children — we didn’t have very much,” she shared.

After interviewing for summer missions service in 1969 through the then-BSU in Tuscaloosa, Hill thought she would be sent somewhere in the U.S. But she was astonished when she discovered she had been chosen to go to Israel. “I ... felt that it was truly providential,” she remarked.

The summer of 1972

In 1972, a second opportunity arose for Hill to return to Israel and serve for the summer.

When Terry spotted the Israel missions opportunity on a BSU bulletin board one day, she decided it was where she wanted to next serve.

So Hill and Terry embarked to Israel the summer of 1972 to serve on a missions team guided by Norman Lytle, a missionary through the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) who was living in the country at the time with his family.

It was the same summer a devastating terrorist attack occurred at Lod Airport (now known as Ben Gurion Airport) near Tel Aviv, Israel (see story, page 12), and another occurred against Israel’s Olympic athletes in Munich.

Hill and Terry traveled separately, and Hill recalled arriving in Israel one day before the attack. “I arrived on May 29 in Lod Airport, and the very next day was this horrific event,” she recounted. Twenty-six people died in a terrorist attack at the airport by three Japanese Red Army agents.

Seventeen of those killed were Puerto Rican Christians who had traveled to Israel for a biblical pilgrimage.

In the days and weeks following the attack, members of the missions team made ministering to and visiting with some of the Puerto Rican survivors a major focus of their work. They made weekly visits to the hospitals and found numerous ways to encourage those healing from the incident.



Photo courtesy of Pat Terry

Baptists sponsor a birthday party in 1972 at an Israeli hospital for one of the Puerto Rican victims of the Lod Airport Massacre.

Some of the uninjured survivors stayed at a hotel close to the Jerusalem House Student Center, where Terry and Hill’s team served that summer with Lytle and his wife, Martha.

Terry remembers visiting with Puerto Rican survivor Pastor José Franqui, who had lost his wife in the gunfire. When she and others from the missions team went to visit Franqui, he had just acquired his wife’s belongings. He shared the story of how a small Bible in his jacket pocket at the time of the attack had stopped what could have been a deadly bullet.

“He showed us his Bible that had saved his life,” Terry recounted. “And then, this is the most memorable thing, he asked us to sing his wife’s favorite hymn together, and it was ‘How Great Thou Art.’ And of course he was singing in Spanish and we were singing in English, and [another team member] ... was singing in Arabic. Every time I told the story in churches, I would say, ‘This is what heaven is going to be like because we’re all going to be praising God in our own languages.’”

Another survivor Terry and Hill remember was a woman named Olga who had lost both of her legs in the attack. Terry and others ministered to Olga in the hospital and organized a 21st birthday party for her.

“We helped plan a birthday party for her in August, and we took her a nativity scene from Bethlehem,” Terry recounted.

One of Hill’s most vivid memories of the trip was riding in the van when she arrived on May 29 and traveling “up to Jerusalem.” “Jerusalem sits way up on a hill,” she noted of its ascent. “The very next day [after the attack], we went down ... into the depths of the grief of all these people, and I remember the comparison.”

Terry and Hill’s team remained in the country despite the attack and went on to serve at the Jerusalem House Student



Photo by Julie Payne

Gail Hill (left) and Pat Terry (right) share memories of ministering in Israel in 1972. ‘It was the most vivid experience in my whole life,’ Terry said.

Center that summer. “It was a lovely home at one time that had been purchased by the Baptists and renovated to some extent to be a place for [college] students to come,” Hill shared of the ministry.

While there, the team completed various work projects on the grounds. They also made themselves available to talk with the visiting students, play games and share stories.

This was not an experience that became a distant memory as soon as the women returned home. The events of the summer and those they had ministered to remained in their hearts and on their minds.

Full-time missions service

“For years I showed my slides of Israel in a lot of churches, and those pictures of the Puerto Rican people were always in there,” Terry said.

Both women’s missions journey eventually led them into full-time missions service. Hill was later appointed as a missionary to India, where she served four years as the director of nursing for a Baptist hospital. Terry was appointed as a missionary to Venezuela where she served for 11 years.

And now they both work in the health-related academic field, teaching at universities, both in Birmingham.

On May 30, Terry attended a 40th anniversary remembrance ceremony in Puerto Rico that honored the Puerto Ricans who were killed and injured in the 1972 attack (see story, this page). During her visit, she was able to reunite with the Lytles and others she met in Israel that summer, including Franqui.

“I was able to tell the survivors we had known and their families that when I showed the slides of Israel, I always talked about what happened [that summer] and asked the people in the churches to pray for them,” she said. 🕊

Ceremony honoring massacre victims, survivors ‘a huge reunion’

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

May 30th was a hot day in San Juan, Puerto Rico, with temperatures soaring into the 90s. Shielded from the sun under large white tents, a group of about 200 people gathered outdoors to attend the 40th anniversary remembrance ceremony to honor both the Puerto Rican victims and survivors of the May 30, 1972, Lod Airport Massacre in Israel (see story, page 12).

For those in attendance, it was a time of remembrance, reflection and special reunions.

Norman Lytle and his wife, Martha, had served as Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) missionaries in Israel from 1964 to 1992 and were living with their children on the Mount of Olives during the time of the attack.

Several U.S. college students had joined the Lytles in Israel the summer of 1972 to serve in various ministry capacities.

Pat Terry, professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford University in Birmingham and a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, was one of the college students who served alongside the Lytles that summer.

Terry and the Lytles never forgot about the Puerto Rican survivors they ministered to after the attack. After receiving invitations from the Puerto Rican Senate to attend the ceremony in San Juan, they looked forward to reuniting with those they had met in the midst of tragedy 40 years ago.

During the ceremony, which lasted from about 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., a Lod Massacre memorial was dedicated. One area of the memorial contains the names of the 17 Puerto Rican victims, and another area is inscribed with a summarized history of the attack.

The Lod Massacre memorial is part of a Holocaust memorial plaza that sits across the street from the Capitol building in Old San Juan. Terry explained that the Jewish community in Puerto Rico helped raise funds for the memorials.

The touching ecumenical ceremony included words from several religious leaders. “The best part was the testimonies of the survivors,” Terry noted. “It (the ceremony) was wonderful and the reception was even better because we got to sit around tables and talk to Pastor [José] Franqui and ... some of the other [survivors] we had known.”

According to Norman Lytle, Franqui lost his first wife, Vasthi Zila Morales de Vega, in the 1972 massacre.

Franqui was accompanied to the ceremony by some of his family members, including his current wife who, like Franqui, was also a massacre survivor.

Lytle recalls taking Franqui up the Mount of Olives shortly after the attack because Franqui desired to see the area before he left Israel.

When the two men reconnected 40 years later, Franqui immediately remembered Lytle and called him “my Jerusalem pastor.”

“It was very emotional,” Lytle said.

While many of the ceremony’s elements stood out to Lytle, he agreed with Terry that one of the most meaningful aspects of the trip was the opportunity to reunite with the survivors he had ministered to in 1972.

“That’s exactly what it was — a huge reunion of people seeing each other for the first time,” Martha Lytle added. “The group continued to enlarge [that morning] and people began to recognize each other after 40 years. Hugs were many.” 🕊

Accusations of conventions' roles done 'in ignorance'

(continued from page 1)

Baptist Association and mission sponsor Bay Street Baptist Church, Eustis, Fla., of "wanton, willful acts and gross negligence" by failing to do an adequate check into Myers' background prior to retaining him as a church planter and pastor.

The lawsuit claimed that as a church planter, Myers acted as an "agent" of the convention, association and church, receiving organizational support including health insurance, retirement services and support through the state convention's Cooperative Program budget.

"The issues in these kinds of cases are first, whether the person who did the act is an employee of the convention ... and if so, whether or not he acted within the scope of his employment," said Jim Guenther, an outside legal counsel for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

In a prepared statement released to the media, FBC executive director-treasurer John Sullivan, expressed confusion over the jury's verdict. The jury "found that the church planter/pastor was never an employee of the FBC" but nevertheless held the convention responsible for negligent hiring and supervision. The jury's decision was "completely inconsistent with the evidence presented," Sullivan noted.

A state convention has never before been held liable for a pastor it had commissioned, Guenther said, though suits are leveled against state conventions regularly.

Accusations of the conventions' responsibility are done "in ignorance of our polity," he said, because the conventions don't technically control the churches. "We win those cases because no ecclesiastical body outside the congregation controls the church."

At press time, the hearing to determine how the FBC is to compensate the victim's family has not been scheduled. The convention plans to appeal the initial verdict, Sullivan said. (ABP, TAB)

Albertville church fires pastor after sexual abuse charges

An Alabama Baptist church fired its new pastor after his recent arrest on sexual abuse charges in Texas, but it isn't the pastor's first time in jail.

Mark Allen Green, 41, in jail under a \$500,000 bond in Waxahachie, Texas, has a long criminal rap sheet, including nearly a decade in the Texas state prison system before his release in 2007, according to WAFF television in Huntsville, Ala.

A website started by a man in Arlington, Texas, who claims Green stole money from him but could not be arrested, describes him as a "career criminal" who "floats around" four Texas counties and "hides at any local Cowboy Church."

Most recently it was the Cowboy Church of Marshall County in Albertville, which reportedly called Green as pastor a couple of months ago.

Last Sunday church members were informed of his arrest and termination earlier in the week, according to the *Sand Mountain Reporter*.

Church officials weren't talking to local media, saying it was emotional, private and that courts were involved. An unnamed church member told the newspaper the issue polarized the congregation and that Sunday's service turned tense with arguments and shouting.

Randall Stoner, director of missions for Marshall Baptist Association, released a media statement that said, "We

are saddened by the circumstances surrounding his termination but cannot comment further due to legal issues involved."

In a written statement to the *Sand Mountain Reporter*, Stoner said, "While these alleged events involving Mark Allen Green did not happen in Marshall County, we are saddened by the circumstances surrounding his termination."

According to the *Ennis (Texas) Daily News*, Green was arrested May 31 on charges of sexual assault of a child in Ellis County and taken to the Wayne McCollum Detention Center in Waxahachie.

23 charges

Church leaders did not respond to a television reporter's question about whether they did a background check on Green before hiring him. The WAFF website listed 23 charges including theft, failure to appear in court, probation violation and domestic violence against him in six Texas counties between 1992 and 2010.

The Southern Baptist Convention does not screen prospective ministers because under Baptist polity each church is free to choose its own leaders with or without the guidance of denominational leaders.

The denomination encourages local churches to conduct background checks, however, and offers them at discounted prices through LifeWay Christian Resources. (ABP)

Want to know God?

Pastor Fred W. Karthaus III
First Baptist Church, Andalusia

Throughout our lives history has a way of illustrating the eternal truths of God. For example during World War II the city called Dachau was associated with imprisonment and death. The Nazis built a large concentration camp there with slave labor, deprivation and death. Thousands of people were starved, shot, hanged or gassed there.

However after World War II Dachau became a different kind of camp. The former death camp was turned into a refugee center for people fleeing Communism. It became a place to find freedom. For decades Dachau was transformed from a place of death to a place of new life.

Thousands of years before the building of Dachau, there was another place of death. Calvary was known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as a place of suffering, pain and death. At Calvary, criminals were executed for their wickedness. Death was their payment and hatred prevailed. Then on one "Good Friday" everything was changed. On that day, the "Innocent One" Jesus gave His life for the guilty. On that day, He who was blessed became cursed so that those who were cursed could be blessed. On that day, life and death were changed. On that Friday, God transformed a place of death into a place of life. Love prevailed at Calvary!

As we often sing:
"Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!

Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!

Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.

Mercy there was great and grace was free;

Pardon there was multiplied to me;

There my burdened soul found liberty,

At Calvary."

Just as God transformed the place called Calvary, He can transform your life. The blood that Jesus shed at Calvary was shed for you. You can experience God's love, forgiveness and life because of Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary. Admit your sin to God, believe in Jesus as your Savior and commit your life to Him. Turn to Calvary and you will discover the love and the life for which you search.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Ala., is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Please send your resumé to: 900 Padenreich Avenue, Gadsden, AL 35903, ATTN: Search Committee.

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

PASTOR: Prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Mail resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, Lanett, P.O. Box 365, Lanett, AL 36863, or email: dbishop@suscc.edu.

PASTOR: East Gadsden Baptist Church of East Gadsden, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Five plus years of experience as pastor of a Southern Baptist church preferred. Please submit resumé by mail to: Pastor Search Committee, East Gadsden Baptist Church, 211 North Sixth Street, East Gadsden, AL 35903.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Round Island Baptist, Athens, Ala., is seeking a part-time music minister. Submit resumés to: JeanAngel@charter.net, or mail: 16407 Miller Street, Athens, AL 35611. Job description available upon request.

PART-TIME WORSHIP PASTOR: Concord Baptist Church in Bessemer, Ala., is seeking a part-time worship pastor to lead a blended worship service. Please send resumés to: concordbaptist@

bbam.rr.com. You may also visit our website concordfamily.org.

MINISTER OF YOUTH & EDUCATION: Farley Community Church (a Southern Baptist church) in Huntsville, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of youth and education. Resumés may be sent to: Farley Community Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 12302 Bell Road, Huntsville, AL 35803.

OTHER POSITIONS

CHURCH SECRETARY: Woodward Avenue Baptist Church is seeking a full-time financial secretary. Applicants should possess financial, communications and computer skills. Salary and benefits. Send resumé to: 801 Woodward Avenue, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661.

CHURCH PIANIST: Sharon Heights Baptist Church, Brookside, Ala., (near Gardendale) is seeking a church pianist. To apply or to further inquire about this ministry opportunity, contact Marc Culver (minister of music) at marc@sharonheights.org. No phone calls please.

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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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.

Why I RECOMMEND *The Alabama Baptist*

For the past 20 years, the state of Alabama has been the battleground between the gambling interests and those who opposed seeing the clutches of gambling magnates around the neck of our state. Alabama Baptists are thankful for the victories won in this arena.

Alabama Baptists have been kept abreast on the skirmishes and battles of the gambling wars in our state through the pages of *The Alabama Baptist*. The coverage of our state Baptist paper on the gambling controversy has been recognized for thorough reporting and effective presentation on legislation, lawsuits and public pronouncements on the gambling issue.

Alabama Baptists need a balance to the coverage of the mainstream media on moral issues. *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper presents coverage of the Alabama Legislature and the discussion of moral concerns in community life from a Christian worldview and, in particular, from

a Baptist perspective. Granted, gambling is not the only moral issue, but the attention given to this issue by *The Alabama Baptist* illustrates the work of our state paper to inform Baptists on public policy that affects the



Pastor John Killian
Maytown Baptist Church

moral climate of the state of Alabama and the entire country.

While remaining doggedly nonpartisan, *The Alabama*

Baptist has kept information before Baptist readers on efforts to expand gambling, challenges to religious freedom, the right to life, liberalization of alcohol laws and other moral concerns of Baptists. While other publications claim merely to produce information, *The Alabama Baptist* makes

no apology for their advocacy on these issues, in addition to reporting of news surrounding these issues. As a pastor, I am thankful that Baptists have *The Alabama Baptist* as a tool to make a difference in our state.

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Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving
Year to Date through May 31, 2012

MAY	CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,641,666
	CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$3,840,741
	Over Goal for Month	\$199,075

YEAR TO DATE	CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$18,208,330
	CP Challenge Budget Gifts	\$17,764,328
	Under Goal for Year	\$444,002

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

▶ **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will hold a showing of the film “Courageous” on June 24, 6 p.m. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

CONECUH

▶ **Jim Collins** is the new pastor of **Evergreen Church**. He received his bachelor's degree in Christian ministry from Leavell College in New Orleans and a bachelor of arts degree in Christian ministry with a minor in biblical studies and a master of divinity with a specialization in biblical studies from New Orleans



COLLINS

Seminary. Collins and his wife, Laura, have two children. The Collins family previously served in Mexico as Baptist representatives with the International Mission Board.

EAST CULLMAN

▶ The combined choirs of **East Cullman Association** will present three Hymn Project concerts on June 22-24, 7 p.m. nightly. The concerts will be held at First Church, Hanceville, on June 22; Fairview High School on June 23 and Northbrook Church, Cullman, on June 24. For information call 256-737-9918. Randy Makemson is

director of missions for East Cullman Association.

GENEVA

▶ **Shiloh Church, Hartford**, will celebrate homecoming June 24 with Royal City in concert. Lunch will follow. Coley Holloway is interim pastor.

LIMESTONE

▶ **Round Island Church, Athens**, will celebrate its 195th anniversary June 24, 10 a.m. Mike McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Association, will preach. For information call 256-233-1230. Mike Green is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

▶ **Mount Vernon Church, Collinsville**, will hold the Hubert Cox Memorial Singing School on June 18-22, 6:30 p.m. nightly. Dennis George is the instructor. For information call 256-526-8272. Terry Burke is pastor.

MOBILE

▶ **Len Chilton** is the new director of education ministries at **Woodridge Church, Mobile**. Chilton previously served Dauphin Way Church, Mobile; Hickory



CHILTON

Grove Church, Charlotte, N.C.; and was founding pastor of Dayspring Church, Mobile. Mack Morris is pastor.

MUD CREEK

▶ **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate homecoming June 24, 1:30 p.m. The Royal Masters Quartet will sing. Johnny Thacker is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

▶ **Heritage Church, Pell City**, will hold a southern gospel singing with Vocal Event June 16, 6 p.m. Jesse Hayes is pastor of Heritage Church.

TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host an event to welcome new Tuscaloosa Association Director of Missions Sam Day and his family June 24, 2-4 p.m.

TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Michael Stephens** is the new pastor of **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**. Stephens has been serving as interim pastor of the church for the past four months.



STEPHENS

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

The Alabama Baptist will not publish an issue July 5. Church announcements with an event date prior to July 12 need to be submitted by June 21. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 1-800-803-5201, Ext. 112.

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Time for renewal

Shocco Springs' summer season in full swing despite economic pinch

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since the turn of the 20th century Alabama Baptists have been using the land that is now Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center as a restful place for meetings and worship.

Located near Talladega, Shocco's property serves as an ideal place for Christian and non-profit groups to hold events such as Bible conferences, youth camps and leadership training retreats. Though they are open year-round, summertime is by far Shocco's busiest season, and the camp is typically booked with back-to-back youth and children's camps and adult retreats.

"About 60 percent of all our business comes during the summer," said Buster Taylor, Shocco's executive director. But this year's bookings are not quite as tight and some space remains available for summer and fall, he noted.

"During this recession and following the massive tornadoes of last year, we have heard from many churches that budgets are tight and camp funds are a challenge," Taylor

said. "However God has taken care of our needs even in these difficult times, and we do see positive signs of growth in the economy."

And with the Alabama Legislature's recent decision to lengthen the summer break for schools by as much as three weeks, there are now even more opportunities for retreats at Shocco this year.

"Our goal is to provide a distinctly Christian environment for renewal for all groups that come to Shocco," Taylor said, noting groups planning last-minute events this summer should consider Shocco.

One of Shocco Springs' own employees is a testament to its powerful influence.

Wendy Westerhouse, Shocco's sales and marketing associate, has fond memories of attending Girls in Action camps at Shocco as a child. It was those mountaintop experiences, she says, that eventually led her to feel called to pursue a career in Christian camp ministry. After finishing seminary Westerhouse was asked to fill a position at Shocco, and she's been there ever since.

"I could see how much God



Photo courtesy of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

CALM LOCATION — Students have Bible study at the lake at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

works in a camp environment and how we listen differently," Westerhouse said. "Being in nature — like here at Shocco — He speaks to us and we listen better."

Nick Murray, the ministry event director for Student Life, agrees that there's something very special about Shocco Springs. As someone who helps plan for camps at 30 locations across the U.S., he knows what he's talking about.

"We chose Shocco as the meeting place for our Student Life leadership training week each year, and this place is holy ground to us," Murray said. "It's one of the calmest locations we know, and you can just go into total retreat-mode and be with the Lord."

It is impossible to pinpoint one trait that makes Shocco Springs so distinctive, Westerhouse said. Instead several components — the grounds, the nature, the fellowship, the music, the food, the recreation opportunities and more — all come

together to create what she calls "The Shocco Experience."

Vital to this experience is the Shocco Springs staff, who handle the behind-the-scenes tasks and allow camp leaders to focus on the logistics surrounding the event itself.

"We view ourselves as being partners to each group that comes

to Shocco," Westerhouse said. "We partner with churches and ministries so God can work through them, and we want to help each group accomplish its goals for its Shocco event."

For more information or to book an event, visit www.shocco.org.

(Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)



Photo courtesy of Shocco Springs

WORSHIP — Shocco Springs hosts groups of all ages throughout the year.

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Charlie Thornton, owner

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Register: howard.samford.edu/churchmediainstitute
Information: churchmediainstitute@samford.edu

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Leader Lab is your yearly opportunity for Christ-centered leadership training for all Alabama Baptist pastors, staff members and leaders all in one place for three days.

LEADER LAB

KEY SPEAKERS:

TUESDAY, DOUG MUNTON — SEVEN STEPS TO BECOMING A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN LEADER: “Seven Steps to Becoming a Healthy Christian Leader” is not a stodgy treatise on leadership but a system that takes practical steps toward becoming a healthy leader. A dead-on diagnosis is delivered then a practical and biblical prescription for what ails our leadership is given with a probing and engaging style. During the journey of this conference you will learn to deepen your intimacy with God, discover a vision of what could be, develop a passion for reaching people, sacrifice for God’s kingdom, persevere through difficulties, and strengthen your people skills. *(Doug Munton is pastor of First Baptist Church, O’Fallon, Ill.)*

THURSDAY, JOHN SHEPHERD - CHURCH UNIQUE: “Church Unique” is a visioning process to help churches develop a stunningly unique model of ministry that leads to a redemptive movement. It guides churches away from an internal focus to emphasize participation in their communities and surrounding culture. An approach for rethinking what it means to lead with clarity as a visionary is presented. Each church has a culture that reflects its particular values, thoughts, attitudes and actions and shows how church leaders can unlock their church’s individual DNA and unleash their congregation’s one-of-a-kind potential. *(John Shepherd is pastor of River Oaks Community Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn.)*

WEDNESDAY LABS:

- Year One: Lead Like Jesus
- Year Two: Leadership Greatness
- Year Three: Coaching on the Run
- Year Four: Conflict Management: Turning Strife into Synergy

Want more information on the curriculum labs? Check www.alsbom.org/leaderlab for full descriptions.



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Participate in the entire Lab including sessions with both guest leaders Doug Munton and John Shepherd as well as the full day of curriculum-based labs. If your schedule is a bit full, pick either session with our guest speakers, the full day of curriculum labs or a combination of two of the three days to personalize your leadership training opportunities.

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All pastors, church staff members or any church member in a leadership position.

What do I get for my registration fee?

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What will Leader Lab cost?

Full Lab experience begins at \$149 or

\$45 for a single day. Check out www.alsbom.org/leaderlab for more rates. We are your cost-effective exceptional experience for Christ-centered leadership training. Compare to other three-day events starting at \$300 to \$1700 or more.

The easiest and fastest way to get more information and to register is by visiting our website www.alsbom.org/leaderlab or contact the Office of Leadership & Church Health by calling 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256.



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 17

Explore the Bible By Doug Wilson Professor, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

ACCOUNTABILITY DARE Joshua 7:1, 5-8, 10-15

You and I are accountable for our actions. In fact, we are answerable for our thoughts, our words and our deeds. But to whom do we answer? Who holds us accountable? Is it our parents, our spouse, our pastor, our Sunday School teacher, our boss, our neighbor? Or are we simply answerable to God?

Many American believers today presume upon God's grace. We assume that God is obligated to forgive us. We consider it easier to ask forgiveness than permission, especially when we know the answer is no. We have no shame.

Such was the case of Achan, a soldier in Israel's army. Thirty-six of his fellow infantrymen died in battle as a result of his selfishness. Achan, his wife and children would die because of his "secret" sin that no one was supposed to discover. Until Achan was held accountable, the nation was in danger.

Sin is Serious (1, 5)

Materials and individuals devoted to God belong to Him (Lev. 27:28-33). When Jericho was defeated, the possessions collected were not for gaining individual wealth. They were devoted to God. Achan, of the tribe of Judah, stole clothing and objects of precious metal which were set apart for God's purposes. As a result, God brought judgment on a nation for the sin of one man.

Presumption, pride and personal sin resulted in men dying in the battle of Ai. Joshua presumed, failing to pray for God's direction in this campaign. The soldiers were prideful, assuming that only part of the army would suffice for the engagement. Achan's larceny affected his fellowship with God, his troops and eventually his family. The immediate results were that 36 men died, and the rest of the troops ran for their lives.

Turn to God (6-8)

Joshua and the 70 elders entered into a time of public repentance, mourning before God. Each man covered himself with dust as a sign of humility, and Joshua tore his

robe in anguish. Israel had sinned against God, and the elders knew it.

Note that they did not blame God, nor did they accuse Him of being unfair. Joshua acknowledged God's faithfulness. He also recognized that an army in retreat does not demonstrate the favor of God. Most importantly, though, Joshua turned to God, asking how He would defend His own honor. In brokenness, Joshua asked God to glorify Himself through His people.

Deal with Sin (10-13)

The Torah was broken. Laws given at Mount Sinai that governed the covenant with Israel had been abandoned (Lev. 27). Israel had not kept the stipulations of this conditional agreement with God. Now God would withdraw His blessing until the judgment on sin was administered.

God was clear in His covenant with Israel. If they sought after Him, He would bless them with everything they needed. If they disobeyed Him, He would curse them (Deut. 28:15-68). Of particular significance, Israel would suffer military defeat and flee from its enemies as a sign of God's condemnation (Deut. 28:25). They were a nation under judgment until they dealt with the sin among them.

Sin is Costly (14-15)

The man responsible for stealing from God would be executed for his crime against God. He would be hunted down by tribe, by clan, and finally by family. He would be confronted publicly before the assembly. He would be called to account for his crime and to confess. He would be put to death. His wife would die. His sons would die. His daughters would die. Their bodies would be burned and then buried under a large pile of stones as a reminder of the event. Sin has a price.

Christians know that sin was costly to Jesus. Somehow we have forgotten that the cost of sin is high for us. The penalty of sin has been paid, but the consequences of sin still devastate families. There is no secret sin.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

HOW DO YOU TREAT GOD? Malachi 2:17-3:12

It is not surprising that when the European Reformation took place in the 16th century the clearest expression of its influence was the radical way in which worship was transformed in the churches of Geneva, London and Edinburgh. Expressions of worship are a reflection of the inner work of God's Spirit on our minds and hearts. Malachi follows up his critique of Israel's attitude toward worship in chapter 1, when the people complained, "what a weariness this is!" as an expression of their complacency toward worshipping God. The prophet begins this section by telling the people that God was weary with them.

Do You Weary God? (2:17-3:5)

The word "weary" has a parallel in Isaiah 43:24 when God complains that Israel "has wearied me with their iniquities." In this context it wearies God that Israel is questioning the way in which He acts in the world and wondering if He is just in allowing the wicked to prosper. They do this without realizing that they themselves are among the wicked.

The Lord's answer to Israel's complaint is to warn them that He will send a messenger who will come and refine His people with fire and "like a fuller's soap." God indicates that the real issue at stake here is the impurity of the people of Israel, who need to be refined. God's presence is often likened to fire that purifies as well as judges. Here God is like a refiner who melts down silver so that its impurities can be removed. This is a delicate process that takes time and close attention, and a refiner knows that the process is complete only when he can see his reflection in the mirror-like surface of the metal.

The work of grace in our lives is not completed in a moment but over a lifetime. It is only as the image of the Lord Jesus is seen in our attitudes and actions that we can know the work of the Spirit is effective. The people had accused God of injustice; but in verse 5 He accuses them of injustice: practicing sorcery, committing adultery, telling lies in court, oppressing workers through low wages, neglect-

ing the needs of widows and orphans and turning their backs on the plight of aliens. The source of all these sins, according to Malachi, is that the people "do not fear" God.

Do You Turn from God? (3:6-7)

Malachi is concerned that the people have turned their backs on God and have changed in their attitude toward Him. They have "turned aside" from keeping the statutes and commands of God's law. The sins that are specified in verse 5 are all actions that the laws of Moses condemned and that earlier prophets such as Amos, Micah and Hosea had spoken against. Yet Malachi indicates in these verses that all hope has not been lost: if only the people would "return to [God]" then "[God] will return to them." Yet even with this message of hope, the apathy of the people is seen so clearly in their response, "How shall we return?" Repentance is crucial in the life of faith, not only as we first turn to God from our sins but as we, as the Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford once said, "break off a piece of sin every day." Israel has no sense of guilt or shame; their conscience has been dulled by a history of unfaithfulness to God.

Do You Rob God? (3:8-12)

Malachi now brings his accusations to a specific item of their unfaithfulness: robbing God by failing to bring Him "tithes and offerings." Giving to God is part of faithful worship. Amos makes it clear that we can tithe with no inner change within our lives, and he condemns those who "love to tithe" (Amos 4:4-5) but do not promote "justice roll[ing] down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:21-25). Jesus warned that we could tithe our mint and cummin and yet have no concern for the "weightier" matters of God's law such as "justice and the love of God" (Luke 11:42).

Malachi calls the people to return to the Lord and offer all of their lives to Him, not only in bringing their tithes and offerings but in opening their hearts to a work of grace that will lead to spiritual renewal as He "opens the windows of heaven" and pours out His blessings on their lives.

Christian Crossword

By Evelyn Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
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Across

1. Gristled and ___ horses. (Zech. 6:3)
4. They removed from _____. (Num. 33:28)
9. The ___ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isa. 7:18)
12. Villages in the plain of _____. (Neh. 6:2)
13. My son was dead, and is ___ again. (Luke 15:24)
14. Rodent.
15. David ... escaped to the cave _____. (1 Sam. 22:1)
17. ___ the son of Enan. (Num. 1:15)
19. Two ___ more hereafter. (Rev. 9:12)
20. ___ with zeal as a cloak. (Isa. 59:17)
21. Insensitive.
23. Lowest speed.
26. The ___, he is unclean unto you. (Lev. 11:6)
27. What ___ have ye? (Luke 6:32)
28. I am _____. (Isa. 41:4)
29. Assistance.
30. ___ that seek me early shall find me. (Prov. 8:17)
31. Whose ___ is in his hand. (Matt. 3:12)

Down

32. ___, the son of Peleth. (Num. 16:1)
33. The ___ hear his voice. (John 10:3)
34. A sect.
35. Methods.
37. He ___ them all. (Ps. 147:4 NKJV)
38. ___ his garments. (2 Sam. 13:31)
39. The wicked man travaileth with _____. (Job 15:20)
40. Sharpen every man his _____. (1 Sam. 13:20)
42. Not in the ___ of the letter. (Rom. 7:6)
45. Took ___ by the hand. (Matt. 9:25)
46. There were ___ besides unto them. (Jer. 36:32)
48. A wave of the _____. (James 1:6)
49. One little ___ lamb. (2 Sam. 12:3)
50. Son, go work _____. (Matt. 21:28)
51. God ___ them in the firmament. (Gen. 1:17)
3. Given me to _____. (Eph. 3:2)
4. Idle _____. (Luke 24:11)
5. ___, that great city Babylon! (Rev. 18:10)
6. Edge.
7. St.
8. ___ on the land. (Mark 6:47; 2 words)
9. A ___ adorneth herself. (Isa. 61:10)
10. Eye, ___ nose, and throat doctor
11. Greek letter.
16. He that findeth his life shall ___ it. (Matt. 10:39)
18. Doth the ___ fly by thy wisdom? (Job 39:26)
20. A fastener.
21. Confusion.
22. In a very ___ day. (Prov. 27:15)
23. Put off thy _____. (Ex. 3:5)
24. I ___ not want. (Ps. 23:1)
25. A plain man, dwelling in _____. (Gen. 25:27)
27. A short essay.
30. Wash their hands and their feet _____. (Ex. 30:19)
31. Let the sea roar, and the ___ thereof. (Ps. 96:11)
33. His ___ in the east. (Matt. 2:2)
34. She conceived, and bare _____. (Gen. 4:1)
36. They look and ___ upon me. (Ps. 22:17)
37. Golfer's aide.
39. Between ___ and _____. (Deut. 17:8)
40. ___ shall bring forth a son. (Matt. 1:21)
41. ___ thee two tables of stone. (Ex. 34:1)
42. The ___ number of them. (Num. 3:48)
43. Thou shalt ___ greater things. (John 1:50)
44. The people ___ down to eat. (Ex. 32:6)
47. "I ___." (Wedding)





Kazakhstan continues to prevent freedom of religion

TALDYKORGAN, Kazakhstan — Kazakhstan continues to use land use regulations as a means to prevent religious communities and their members from exercising freedom of religion or belief, Forum 18 News Service reported.

In one of several recent examples, in Taldykorgan the authorities have with this tactic forced a Methodist church to “voluntarily” close and fined the wife of the church’s pastor.

Pastor Valery Kim said the church paid for an announcement in newspapers that it was liquidating itself.

“We do not want more punishment from the authorities,” he said. Zhumagul Alimbekov, head of Almaty Region’s Agency of Religious Affairs department, said, “The church will be closed down anyway unless they can collect 50 signatures for re-registration.”

Asked why Kazakhstan, whose government loudly boasts of its alleged religious tolerance, obstructs people exercising the internationally recognized right to freedom of religion or belief, Alimbekov claimed, “We are a law-governed state. We must obey the law.”

Christian leader being neglected by Israeli prosecutor

JERUSALEM — A Messianic Jewish congregation leader whose son was almost killed by a bomb planted by an ultra-right-wing Jew said he feels like the Israeli justice system has abandoned him.

On May 28 the Jerusalem District Court approved a plea agreement for Jack Teitel, accused of bombing pastor David Ortiz’s home, without consulting Ortiz or his attorneys, Ortiz said. The plea agreement is unique in that the court said Teitel committed the acts but did not hold him responsible for committing them.

Ortiz, leader of the Congregation of Ariel, said the prosecutor’s office has also consistently misled his attorneys about basic information on important court filings for the case.

Teitel has multiple charges against him for several acts of violence including two killings, but prosecutors in Ortiz’s case have sidelined or deliberately avoided him, Ortiz said.

The prosecutor that is supposed to be protecting Ortiz’s interests is neglecting his duty, he added. “He doesn’t want to be seen protecting Christians,” Ortiz said. “It doesn’t benefit him in society.”

Pakistani Christian graveyard taken by retired soldier

BHONDARY WALA, Pakistan — Christians in a village in Punjab Province are fighting to save their decades-old graveyard from being converted into farmland by a retired army colonel, sources said.

Police have refused to address the complaint by Christians of Bhondary Wala village in Narang Mandi in spite of orders from senior administration officials, the sources said.

Rehmat Masih said that Col. Farrukh Alam has claimed ownership of 150 acres of land and has threatened area Christians if they did not vacate it.

The retired army official acknowledged that the land originally had been designated as a Christian graveyard, but that the land was declassified as such and sold in 1983.

He said he found out the land belonged to him a few years ago. Masih said Alam was threatening him and other Christians.

Police order Bible study group to cancel meetings

TAMIL NADU, India — On April 30 in Banglawmedu, state police cancelled a three-day Bible study after Hindu extremists from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) disrupted the meeting, roughed up those present and ordered them to cease alleged forced conversions.

The pastor and other Christians went to a nearby police station and filed a complaint against the BJP members. Police issued a warning to the extremists, but then ordered the Christians to cancel the remainder of their Bible study meeting.

Gambling magnate McGregor to appeal conspiracy lawsuit

By **Sondra Washington**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama gambling magnate Milton McGregor has spent much of this past year in federal courtrooms trying to stay out of prison and fighting to hold on to his riches, and his legal calendar is not clear just yet. While he managed to avoid jail time for a legislative vote-buying scheme, his lawyers promised to appeal a recent civil lawsuit verdict requiring McGregor and his VictoryLand casino to pay \$64 million to a Macon County business and several affiliated charities for reportedly conspiring to maintain a monopoly on the county’s so-called “electronic bingo” gambling business.

According to *The Birmingham News*, “the lawsuit was filed in 2006 in Montgomery federal court by a business consortium called Lucky Palace that wanted to set up a rival operation and the 15 charities that had contracted with it to operate ‘bingo’ in the county. The county’s ‘bingo’ regulations were issued and amended twice to ensure that no rival could get into the ‘bingo’ business, according to the lawsuit.”

While this amount of award money may seem like an important ruling against the corrupt business

practices many gambling opponents have repeatedly said are associated with gambling, McGregor and his attorneys could still use the civil court process to avoid major repercussions from the case, according to Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston.

“Since many parties in civil cases settle out of court, he (McGregor) may settle that case for some undisclosed amount,” Johnston said. “They may have some real error (in the trial) that they might use to get the case reversed and if that is true they will try to appeal. ... Often what happens is you appeal and the purpose of the appeal is to have a way to negotiate a significant reduction of the judgment. They (lawyers) are sometimes interested in getting it reviewed only if the plaintiff does not want to settle.”

Aside from this case, Johnston said, “The real question now is will there be a competing casino in Macon County, because the jury has ruled that McGregor kept this other group from coming in. Now that they were found guilty, does that mean that [Lucky Palace] is going

to be able to go in and set up something?”

Questions also remain about the future of VictoryLand. Although the casino’s business leaders said they planned to reopen the Shorter casino after McGregor was acquitted in the federal legislative corruption trial and after Alabama lawmakers failed to pass a bill making violations of the state’s anti-gambling laws more severe, VictoryLand was not open at press time.

Johnston said he has heard rumors that subpoenas related to gambling have been issued but it is unknown who issued the subpoenas and for what purpose.

“We are kind of in a stalemate right now,” he added. “What is going to happen next is going to be interesting. We don’t know who will make the next move and what it might be between the gamblers on one side and the state of Alabama on the other. I don’t think either side knows what is going to happen next.”

“We are kind of in a stalemate right now. What is going to happen next is going to be interesting.”



Someone You Should Know

By **Christine Kapurch**
Correspondent, TAB

HOWARD GOLDEN

Hillside Baptist Church, Wetumpka
Elmore Baptist Association



GOLDEN

FAVORITE VERSE: Romans 1:17
FAVORITE HYMN: “Amazing Grace”
HOBBIES: Gardening, volunteering and teaching

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Johnnie for 63 years; three children, Angela, Amelia and Steve; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren

Retired Pastor Howard Golden served for more than 50 years in various churches throughout Alabama and Indiana. Some of his Alabama pastorates included Lincoln Baptist Church and Calera Baptist Church. After completing seminary in 1952, Golden began teaching at the Samford Extension. This program trains men who could not attend college to become preachers. Golden also started a teaching extension with the maximum security prisons in Talladega and has continued this work in the state for more than 27 years. In addition, he is a Sunday School teacher at Hillside Baptist.

Q: When and how were you led into the ministry?

A: When I was a senior in high school I felt like Christ was calling me to serve. I went to Howard College (now Samford University) where I met my wife and then went to the seminary after.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: First of all, faithfulness and love for God’s Word and love for the people. [Also] love for studying God’s Word and preaching God’s Word.

Q: What do you get from the ministry?

A: I recently saw seven couples that I married in my first year that have been married 50 years now. God has been wonderfully, wonderfully good to me and blessed me beyond measure. I’ve learned without Him I can do

nothing, but with Him all things are possible.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: They are all very supportive and I’m very proud of the support I get from my family. They are all active too, and I’m proud of that.

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

A: I hope to continue teaching at the prison. There has been a consistency in my class attendance. The people in my class are consistent about their study and staying with me.

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

A: He’s my everything ... with Him all things are possible. Without Him I can’t do anything.

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'Invite the Glorious into the mundane'

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Singer/songwriter Nockels balances ministry, motherhood

These days, singer/songwriter Christy Nockels is keeping a lighter touring schedule now that she has three young children. "I've prayed to somehow make this work with three kids, and the Lord has shown me this target sign to reflect on," Nockels said. "This image constantly reminds me that if I focus on the things I need to do for my husband, children and the life that I need to have with them, that is the main target and keeps things in perspective for me. Every area of my life needs to reflect living for God's glory and His renown, and that starts with taking care of my family."

As a young girl, Nockels' parents realized that God had given her a unique gift to minister through music. She grew up in Oklahoma as the daughter of a pastor and a piano teacher, which infused her heart with a love for music and God's Word at a young age.

"I sang my first solo in church when I was 8 or 9 years old," Nockels said. "I remember my dad saying, 'Why don't you find a song that means something to you and share it with our church family?' I'm so thankful for my parents' encouragement, and as I look back now, it's so amazing that God gave me the opportunity to sing in front of people at such an early age. It made me feel completely at ease in front of audiences, and I started singing in church quite a bit and joined choirs and ensembles."

"I really developed a love for music early in life, and I started writing songs when I was in seventh grade. I still have stacks and stacks of those papers hidden away in a box. I didn't really know what I was doing back then — it was just who I was. When I look back on it now, it amazes me quite a bit to think how God was really stirring my heart toward what I am doing today."

Although Nockels limits her touring schedule to be able to spend more time with her family, she still serves as a worship leader at Passion City Church in Atlanta and frequently leads worship for women's conferences around the country.

Realizing the huge responsibility of crafting theologically sound worship songs, Nockels spends a great deal of time reading the Bible and praying about songwriting.

"My desire through leading worship and songwriting is to help people communicate intimately with the living God and to leave a legacy of proclaiming Jesus' fame to this generation," Nockels said.

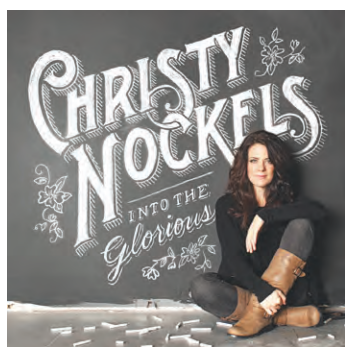
"Writing songs that people are using to worship God is not only a privilege, but also a huge responsibility. I always want to make sure the songs are based on the



Photos courtesy of The Media Collective

Word of God. I really desire to put songs with biblical truths in people's homes, cars and their hearts and minds — that's something that I feel like God has called me to do. I've always said, 'With the right song in their mouth, people can change the world.'

The inspiration for the songs on her newest album, "Into the Glorious," came in the midst of ordinary life experiences such as cleaning the house, grocery shopping or waiting to pick up her children from school.



"I hope that these songs are a way for people to renew their minds and reflect on what Christ has done and for people to draw near to Him," Nockels said. "In whatever season of life someone's in, it's so amazing for people to sing praises to God while conveying their thoughts and prayers to Him."

"The concept for this album really started when I was talking with a friend who is an incredible songwriter and mother of nine children. To top it off, she home-schools all of her children. She's an amazing, godly woman. With tears in my eyes, I asked, 'How do you get the laundry done and also find time to write songs? And how do you shepherd the hearts of your children so gracefully?' She told me, 'You have to invite the glorious into the mundane.' That really struck me."

"It's like God was letting me test that truth in my own life. I didn't have two hours to sit down and write a song, but God used the little moments that I experience every day and did something extraordinary through them. I hope that when people listen to these songs they'll go on a journey in their hearts. The theme of this record that is woven into all the songs is this sweet truth: in what seems like the mundane, ordinary times in our lives, we serve an extraordinary God who knows right where we are. During those moments when everything is given over completely to the Lord, that is when God is able to do extraordinary things in and through us." ❧

World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Archaeologists discover ancient Bethlehem seal

SILWAN, Israel — The Israel Antiquities Authority revealed May 23 what it is calling the earliest archaeological evidence of the city of Bethlehem.

Archaeologists have discovered a bulla — a piece of clay used to seal documents and other objects — that is only about half of an inch across and has the word "Bethlehem" written on it in ancient Hebrew.

"This is the first time the name Bethlehem appears outside the Bible, in an inscription from the First Temple period, which proves that Bethlehem was indeed a city in the Kingdom of Judah, and possibly also in earlier periods," said Eli Shukron, director of the excavation, in a statement.

The first appearance of Bethlehem in the Bible is in the Book of Genesis after Jacob's wife, Rachel, died following childbirth. The book says she was buried "on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)." Bethlehem is also the hometown of the biblical King David, the setting for the Book of Ruth, and the birthplace of Jesus Christ.

The bulla predates Jesus' life on earth by several hundred years. Shukron says it was likely used to seal shipments of remittances for taxes — which consisted of either silver or agricultural produce — in Judah during the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C.

Shukron says his find shows that a shipment was sent from Bethlehem to Jerusalem in the seventh year of a king's reign, although he is uncertain if it was Hezekiah, Manasseh or Josiah on the throne at the time.

The Ir David Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving and developing the City of David, is the underwriter for the sifting part of the archaeological project, which is being conducted in the Emek Tzurim National Park.

Kazakh police frame, fine Baptist leaders

SEREBRYANSK, Kazakhstan — Kazakhstan continues to punish people exercising their internationally recognized right to freedom of religion or belief without state permission, sources reported. Raids, often without search warrants, have continued on members of the Baptist Council of Churches, who on principle do not seek state registration.

In a particularly serious development, Baptist Vasily Stakhnev appears to have been framed by police and then given a large fine for the "offense" of distributing religious literature — which he vehemently insists that he did not do.

Police apparently pressured his neighbors to write false testimonies against him. One neighbor said they were "not even sure what I signed for the police." Stakhnev insisted he had not distributed any literature, and that he was only "guilty" of possessing Christian literature in his private home.

Local police Chief Serikhan Tozhigitov of Serebryansk Police said, "We did not force anyone to sign anything."

Israel agrees to recognize non-Orthodox rabbis

JERUSALEM — When activist Anat Hoffman learned that the Israeli government had agreed to pay a state-funded salary to several non-Orthodox rabbis — something their Orthodox counterparts have been receiving for decades — she recited the Shehechyanu, an ancient blessing of thanks that Jews intone on special occasions.

"This was the first time the government called a non-Orthodox person — or a woman — a rabbi," said Hoffman, who heads the Jerusalem-based Israel Religious Action Center, the activist arm of Israel's Reform Jewish movement.

The government's landmark decision May 29 comes seven years after Hoffman's agency petitioned Israel's highest court to recognize Miri Gold, a Detroit-born Israeli Reform rabbi, as a bona fide spiritual leader.

Until now Israel's Reform and Masorti (Conservative) movements, which together have about 250 rabbis and 100 congregations, have received no official recognition of their leaders or institutions. In 2011 the government allotted the Orthodox movement \$450 million; the Conservative and Reform movements received \$60,000.

This financial inequality, coupled with the government's refusal to recognize non-Orthodox conversions and weddings performed in Israel, has sparked fireworks between successive Israeli leaders and American Jews.

Speaking from her home on Kibbutz Gezer, a collective community, Gold said she was "a bit shocked" when informed that the government now recognizes her as a "rabbi for the Reform community" — with a salary to boot.

"Now we have to see how it will be implemented," she said with guarded optimism. "This isn't the end of the struggle." ❧