

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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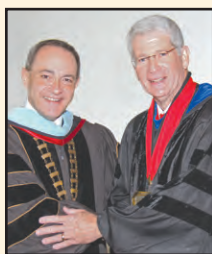
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GROWTH beyond measure



Photos by Brittney Knox

Oswichee Baptist Church, Fort Mitchell, was built in 1882. The 130-year-old building contains its original pews.

130-year-old church to build new facility to reach growing community

By Brittney Knox and Maggie Walsh
Interns, The Alabama Baptist

One day Ralph Henderson, pastor of Oswichee Baptist Church, Fort Mitchell, noticed cinder blocks stacked in the vacant lot that will soon hold a new worship facility. "When I asked one of the members about the cinder blocks, he told me he got them for the foundation of the building and was ready to get started," Henderson said.

This is just one example of how supportive and eager the Oswichee Baptist congregation is, he said. "They just jumped on board and are willing to jump on whatever needs to be done."

The Russell Baptist Association church, which was built in 1882, has a congregation whose enthusi-

asm reaches out into the community through a visitation ministry. Russell County, and especially the area immediately surrounding Oswichee, has experienced a housing boom in the last five years that has become a new ministry field. Fort Mitchell is located 10 miles from Fort Benning, a United States Army post that supports more than 130,000 military personnel, family members and civilians.

"Until about four years ago, the area directly behind this church was just a cotton field," Henderson said. "Now you see dozens and dozens of houses, which are primarily military families."

In these neighborhoods, signs announcing new homes are on nearly every street corner.

The Oswichee congregation regularly goes into these neighborhoods and gives gift bags and church service invitations to the residents.

"We've had some wonderful success with this ministry," Henderson said. "It's opened the door for us to really minister to these families."

Before the outreach ministry, Oswichee averaged 45 people on Sunday mornings. Now the 130-year-old church averages 100 people in services.

"You can't describe what's happening down here," said Wayne Burns, director of missions for Russell Association, referring to the influx of housing and church growth. "You've just got to see it."

"Any growth we have is attributed

to God and His wonderful people," Henderson said. "But right now we're not going to grow any more because we can't get any more people in the church."

The members of Oswichee know that in order to grow, building a new worship facility is vital. Plans for the new facility include a 1,500-square-foot area for classrooms and a nursery, a 2,300-square-foot kitchen and fellowship hall and a sanctuary that will seat approximately 250 people.

The church will break ground on the new facility July 29 with the help of 103-year-old Carolyn Howard, who has been a member of Oswichee for more than 80 years. Henderson said they plan to preserve the current church building as a chapel. ☪

SBC entities issue 1st report on ethnic diversity

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entities have issued their first reports in response to historic measures adopted a year ago to improve accountability in the inclusion of ethnic minorities in SBC life.

All SBC entities submitted reports for the Executive Committee's February meeting about their ministries, including the involvement of ethnic

churches and church leaders in entity activities in response to the 12-part recommendation adopted by messengers to the 2011 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix.

Of the 114 various committee members outgoing president Bryant Wright appointed in the months before his term ended, eight are African-American, five are Asian, three are

Hispanic and one is Native American, giving ethnic minorities a near 15 percent representation.

Synopses of ethnic diversity information from the SBC's entities follow.

► **Executive Committee (EC):** The EC completed a two-year study in February 2011 of how ethnic churches (See 'All,' page 11)

COMMENT

A Spiritual Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

For many Christians it is a lifelong dream — a spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Imagine walking where Jesus walked, seeing where He was born and where He grew up. Picture yourself sailing across the Sea of Galilee or wandering along a street in Capernaum where Jesus spent much of His ministry. Visualize yourself standing on the Mount of Olives with its panoramic view of Jerusalem or tracing the steps that Jesus trod on His way to Calvary.

Time spent in the Holy Land is not just another sightseeing tour. It is a life-changing experience in which the words of the Bible take on new meaning. It is a highlight of a lifetime. That is why Christians for centuries have made the journey to Israel as an act of faith. That is why it is called a spiritual pilgrimage.

Add to that the opportunity to learn what God is doing today in the land of the Bible. Anticipate what it would be like to sit with Southern Baptist representatives as they share about what God is doing among Jews and Arabs in Israel. See yourself walking through a Baptist village outside Tel Aviv where Baptists have worked for more than 50 years or walking through the gates of Jerusalem House — a historic bridge between Arabs, Jews and Christians for decades.

Trip of a lifetime

Stand among the Arab children at the Baptist school in Nazareth as they learn in one of the best schools in Israel. Listen to young people studying for ministry at Bethlehem Bible College. Rejoice with Messianic Jews as they tell about their faith in Jesus Christ.

Add all this together and it makes a trip of a lifetime, an unsurpassed missions experience, a life-changing spiritual event, a dream come true. And it is available to you as a reader of *The Alabama Baptist*.

March 15–25, 2013, I will have the privilege of leading another annual Holy Land Spiritual Pilgrimage Tour. The itinerary has been worked out in cooperation with Baptist representatives in Israel and suggestions from prior participants



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

to provide the best possible experience. In Jerusalem, for example, participants will explore the old City of David, which lies outside the current walls of Jerusalem. Participants will stand on steps where Jesus stood as they climb the Southern Steps of the Temple Mount. They will visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and worship together near the Garden Tomb.

Also on the agenda is the Old Testament city of Dan with its recently discovered gates dating back to the time of Ahab and one of the oldest inhabited sites yet discovered — the ruins of ancient Jericho.

As tour leader it will be my privilege to work with our Christian guide to teach biblical information about each site and the importance of each site in the life and ministry of our Lord and of the New Testament church.

Since my first trip to Israel in 1973 and in all my trips there since, both as tour leader and as guest of the Israeli government, I have never met a believer who did not have his or her Christian

faith strengthened and renewed by visiting the holy sites related to the ministry of Jesus. That is why I am not at all hesitant to describe the tour as a life-changing event.

The other part of the pilgrimage is learning what God is doing in Israel today. To simply look backward is to miss the opportunity to connect what God did through Jesus 2,000 years ago to what He is doing today in the same small land.

Today Baptist representatives work with both Jews and Arabs. The Messianic movement (Jews who believe in Jesus as the Christ) is growing. Work among Arab believers is headed primarily by the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, an organization that celebrated 100 years of Baptist witness in 2011. Pilgrimage participants will learn about how God is working through both groups.

Another important part of the trip will be learning from and encouraging Christian believers in the West Bank. Sometimes it is forgotten that Bethlehem is considered a historically Christian city. Today one finds thriving evangelical churches there and a training center for believers working across the Arab world. But times are hard.

Southern Baptist representatives will guide us as we learn about the mighty acts of God among these people and how Christians in the West can better pray for them.

The March dates should provide mild weather, and because it will be near the end of the rainy season, pilgrims may get to see Israel's unique beauty when the desert is in bloom. Also the dates coincide with spring break for many of Alabama's school systems. That means teachers and other school personnel can take advantage of this opportunity.

Hopefully you can be a part of this Holy Land Spiritual Pilgrimage Tour. You will travel with fellow Baptists, so the group should be compatible and fun to travel with. That has certainly been the experience of similar tours in the past.

The cost is competitive and because of the unique itinerary involving Baptist representatives in Israel, it is unlike any other tour available.

For more information about the cost and other details, write to Holy Land Tour, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham AL 35209; email holyland@thealabamabaptist.org; or call 1-800-803-5201.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Steps of the Temple

Letters to the Editor

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

During the recent meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, a number of concerned messengers visited the Association of Baptists for Scouting booth to ask if they had heard correctly that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) were planning to loosen their standards regarding requirements for adult leaders. I am pleased to say this is not the case. The BSA remains committed to the moral and ethical standards which have been affirmed several times in

Southern Baptist Convention resolutions.

Scouting remains one of the finest evangelism, family ministry and religious education tools available for established churches as well as new church plants. Scouts and their families involved in the religious emblems program are often reached for Christ, and it is not uncommon for youth participants to clarify their calling to vocational ministry.

While I am happy to report Scouting's commitment to the leadership standards, I remind readers that op-

ponents to these policies are relentless and highly vocal. Unfortunately, the "silent majority" remains largely unheard. I believe this is an opportune time to encourage Southern Baptist churches and individual members to send a note of affirmation to BSA for the moral and ethical commitments to which they have remained true for 102 years. The address is: Boy Scouts of America, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079.

R. Chip Turner
Chairman of Boy Scouts of America
Religious Relationships



"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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New legal precedents?

Recent rulings eyed for stand against Poarch Creek's slot machines

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For years, gambling opponents have strategized ways of ridding the entire state of so-called "electronic bingo." With the closing of Alabama's largest casino in Shorter, some are setting their sights on the slot machine-style gambling facilities remaining in the state — those owned by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

The battle between the state and the tribe has trickled along for many years with state officials insisting that the tribe must comply with state law and the tribe denying obligation to any regulations except those established by the federal government and the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). This time, opponents believe two Supreme Court decisions — *Carcieri v. Salazar* and *Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomis Indians v. Patchak* — will be "a giant step to prosecuting Alabama Indian Gambling."

According to Eric Johnston, president of the Southeast Law Institute and legal adviser to Alabama Citizen's Action Program (ALCAP), the high court ruled in 2009 "that Indian tribes must have been recognized by 1934 before their lands would be considered sovereign and protected under federal law." *Carcieri v. Salazar* dealt with local zoning laws. It did not address whether state criminal laws — like Alabama's gambling regulations — apply to Native American tribes.

More recently, on June 18, 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that Patchak, a citizen, could file a lawsuit against a Michigan Indian tribe that was federally recognized in 1999 and planning to open a casino on land they purchased in 2009. The case was returned to trial court without determining whether the tribe could bring its land into trust and establish a casino on it, according to Johnston.

Now Escambia County Commission wants to use these two cases to make Alabama's Poarch Creek Indians pay taxes to the county on

their Wind Creek Casino and Hotel in Atmore. The tribe also owns Creek Casino Wetumpka and Creek Casino Montgomery.

"Currently the tribe claims they are federally exempted from state and local property taxes, sales taxes, tobacco taxes and other fees and taxes," said Sen. Bryan Taylor, R-Prattville, who is also an attorney for the commission. "The Escambia County Commission has questioned whether that tax exemption still stands after the *Carcieri* ruling, but the county has taken no formal legal action."

After the commission requested information from the United States Department of the Interior regarding the Poarch Creek Indians, the department responded with a letter dated June 4 confirming that the Poarch Creek land "was acquired in trust" in 1984 and "proclaimed to be a reservation in 1985."

The letter continued, "The Band enjoys all rights and privileges associated with having its reservation held in trust by the United States under federal law."

Two days later the tribe drafted a news release stating that the department's letter "decisively" dismisses the commission's "contention" that the tribe's lands "are not protected by federal laws."

"This letter shows that Chairman (David) Stokes' attempt to tax the tribe's trust lands is without merit," the release continued. "Indian tribes are recognized several times in the United States Constitution. Most notably the 'Commerce Clause' acknowledges that tribes are considered separate, distinct governments as are states and foreign nations. Therefore none of these entities, nor their lands, is subject to taxation by another form of government."

Taylor disagreed and said the commissioners are "raising fair and legitimate legal questions about the impact of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the tribe's claim to tax-free status."

Johnston also believes the tribe's argument is flawed. Reflecting back on the Supreme Court decision, he believes the Poarch Creek are only protected if they were recognized as a tribe before 1934.

"They said they are sovereign, they are a protected Indian tribe and we can't sue them, but Patchak says we can," Johnston said, noting that if the tribe can be sued for taxes, they can be sued for violating Alabama's anti-gambling law.

He continued, "Then *Carcieri* says they are not protected. ... Their fallback position is that even if they are not protected, they are using Class II gambling and are protected. ... Under IGRA they can have Class II 'bin-

go' — Class III is unlimited gambling. They say Alabama has 'bingo' so they can have 'bingo' in any form. ... They are doing slot machines just like Milton McGregor (owner of VictoryLand in Shorter) and all the other gambling criminals in the state."

Johnston believes the courts are now in a position to address the tribe's gambling operations for what they are.

"We believe the facade of federal protection just crumbled and the Indians may not now flaunt their sham sovereign protection any longer," he noted. "They have mercilessly profited from hapless Alabamians and others for too long. They have profited at the expense of non-Indian gambling in Alabama but they, like the non-Indian enterprises, are violating our criminal laws and they should now pay the price."

**"They have
mercilessly profited
from hapless Ala-
bamians and others
for too long."**

**Eric Johnston
Southeast Law Institute**

Apology from The Alabama Baptist staff

By Bob Terry
The Alabama Baptist

A mistake by the staff of *The Alabama Baptist* is making life difficult for Cecil Taylor, professor of Christian Studies at the University of Mobile and a Sunday School lesson writer for the state Baptist paper. We are glad readers care about what they read in *The Alabama Baptist*. We want the paper always to be "a trusted voice and a welcomed friend." That means when we make a mistake we have to acknowledge it. Otherwise readers will not be able to believe what they read each week.

Taylor wrote the Spring Explore the Bible Sunday School lessons for the state Baptist paper. In the May 17 issue he wrote about the crucifixion of Jesus. He contrasted what the Bible says about Jesus' death with the remains of an unidentified person from Jesus' day who also died from crucifixion.

The May 17 issue was one of the first weeks *The Alabama Baptist* worked without its longtime copy editor, who recently had begun a new ministry with national Woman's Missionary Union. In the course of editing the Sunday School lesson to fit the available space, a serious mistake was made. Worse yet, the edits were not appropriately checked

because the staff was working out new editing and fact-checking procedures.

The result was a paragraph that said Jesus' legs had been broken during crucifixion.

Like many editing mistakes, the problem was discovered after publication. We took the mistake seriously and printed a correction in the May 31st issue on the editorial page. Dr. Taylor had done no wrong. He had written describing the crucifixion of Jesus according to the biblical text. The correction was an effort to exonerate Taylor and take the blame for our mistake.

Heated correspondence

Unfortunately the correction did not accomplish its purpose. Taylor continues to receive heated emails and correspondence questioning his ability to teach in a Baptist college or write Sunday School lessons. A few days ago he received a petition signed by more than 30 people demanding that he repudiate what was written in the Sunday School lesson.

Alabama Baptists are fortunate to have highly qualified, Bible-believing professors teaching in their colleges. *The Alabama Baptist* is glad to partner with these men and women as they write Sunday School lesson

commentaries week in and week out. The lessons provide wonderful resources for Sunday School teachers and participants alike. Taylor is one of the most proficient Sunday School lesson writers.

To him we publicly apologize for the editing mistake and say again to all our readers, the mistake was not his.

We also need to apologize to the Book-Link International ministry for the confusion we caused in the May 31 issue. We ran a feature story on the ministry and added what used to be an Alabama address available for mailing books. Because of the same situation as noted above — working out new editing and fact-checking procedures — we did not realize the Alabama office had been closed. Several people have mailed books, only to have them returned. We retracted the address the following week on page 2, but not everyone saw the retraction. Still it was a mistake on our part and we are very sorry. The correct address is Book-Link International, Inc., 100 Book-Link Way, Eubank, KY 42567.

To all our readers, we apologize again for the mistakes made by our staff.

We have learned from the experiences and are doing better. Please continue to pray for us.

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► The Summer Singer's Camp of **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will present the musical "Down By the Creek Bank" July 22, 6 p.m. For information call 205-425-4381. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Birmingham Association** will hold the BBA Ministers Conference July 30, 11:30 a.m., at First Church, Birmingham. The Baptist Health System will provide a barbecue lunch with all the trimmings. Spouses are invited to attend. Call 205-599-3245 for reservations. Mike McLemore is executive director. ► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will hold Youth Sunday Service July 15. Bible study will be at 10 a.m. and morning worship at 11 a.m. Youth will teach adult Bible classes. Dale Creel is pastor. ► **Valleydale Church, Birmingham**, will hold an English as a Second Language Teacher Training July 19-21. The sessions will be Thursday, 6-9 p.m.; Friday, 6-9 p.m.; and Saturday, 8 a.m.-9 p.m. For information call 205-991-5282.

COFFEE

► **Calvary Church, Enterprise**, will celebrate homecoming July 15, 10 a.m. James and Starla Dean, formally of Kevin Spencer and Friends, will sing. Former Pastor Don Downs will preach. Lunch will follow the service. For information call 334-894-6216. Kerry Mitchell is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Judy Marshall**, wife of music minister for **Calvary Baptist Church, Abbeville**, Ronnie Marshall, died June 19. She was 60. A native of Eufaula, Marshall was Calvary's organist for more than 15 years and was a member of both the Calvary Sanctuary Choir and

Woman's Missionary Union. She was also a past member of the Alabama Singing Women. She retired from Wallace Community College's Sparks Campus as treasurer/accountant after 29 years. Marshall is survived by her husband of 39 years.

ELMORE

► **Elmore Association** will host a Senior Adult Celebration July 24 at First Church, Tallassee. Worship will be at 10 a.m. with the senior adult choir, and a "bring a sandwich" lunch will be at 11:30 a.m. with drinks, chips and dessert provided. An afternoon session will follow with Eileen Mitchell, associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the State Board of Missions (SBOM), and Brother Billy Bob Bohannon. For information call 334-567-7321. Jim Jackson is director of missions.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold revival July 15, 9:30 a.m. The church also will hold a concert with Charles Billingsley July 26, 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. For information call 256-729-1328 or visit www.clements baptist.org. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MARION

► **Kenny Hatcher** is the new pastor of **First Church, Guin**. He holds a doctor of ministry from International Seminary. He previously served as pastor of Northside Church, Selma. Hatcher also served Mars Hill Church, Jemison; Pine Flat Church, Suttle; Community Church, New Hebron; and Haysop Church, Centreville. He serves as chairman of the Christian Life Commission. He is married to Phyllis and they have two children.

SELMA

► **Plantersville Church** will

host a southern gospel singing with The Dixie Echoes July 13, 7 p.m. For information call 334-366-2850. Don Stephens is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Charles Houston (Charlie) Dale** is the new pastor of **First Church, Indian Springs**. He holds a bachelor of science from the University of Alabama and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He previously served several churches in New Orleans and was most recently pastor of Grace Church, New Orleans, from 2007-2012. He and his wife, Shannon, have three children.

ST. CLAIR

► **Chris W. Beck** is the new student minister of **Mount Pisgah Church, Cropwell**. Beck is a graduate of the University of Mobile and holds a degree in Christian studies with a concentration in student ministry. He previously served Holt Church, Tuscaloosa. He is married to Amy. James Blair is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Rock Springs Church, Jacksons Gap**, will celebrate homecoming July 22, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow at noon. Jamey Williams is pastor.

WINSTON

► **New Prospect Church, Haleyville**, will hold revival July 22-25. Sunday services will be 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Monday-Wednesday at 7 p.m. Speakers will be Sammy Gilbreath, SBOM director of evangelism (July 22); evangelist Phil Waldrep (July 23); Jeff Steele & The Steeles (July 24); and evangelist Junior Hill (July 25). Ron Horton is pastor. ☞

Why I RECOMMEND *The Alabama Baptist*

My relationship with *The Alabama Baptist* goes all the way back to my childhood. As one who was born into and raised in an Alabama Baptist church, I cannot recall a time in my younger life when *The Alabama Baptist* was not present in our home. I didn't really pay any attention to it, but it was there.

It was not until my college years, when I became a youth minister, that I actually began to read *The Alabama Baptist*, first for the purpose of keeping up with the goings-on of our state convention, but later for the broader news about Christians around the world that opened my eyes to things I had never before noticed.

Soon afterward, however, I went away to seminary, spending eight years in two other states, subscribing to two other state Baptist newspapers. During that time I began to realize what I had taken for granted in *The Alabama Baptist*: the depth of reporting, the breadth of the news that was included and, above all, the commitment to the gospel.

When my family and I later relocated to Alabama, I was overjoyed to renew my relationship with *The Alabama Baptist* and to find that it was as good — if not better — than I remembered. The quality and the commitment were all there, just as I expected. Now, as the pastor of Liberty Park Baptist



Pastor Scott Guffin
Liberty Park Baptist Church,
Vestavia Hills

Church, Vestavia Hills, I highly value *The Alabama Baptist*, knowing that it not only informs and inspires me, but that it also does the same for my congregation, all of whom are provided with a subscription through the

church, receiving with it our weekly newsletter.

I am confident that *The Alabama Baptist* is helping to broaden the horizons of my church members, much as it did for me as a young youth minister. That's important to me because our church places a strong emphasis on missions

involvement both at home and abroad. As our people participate in missions, they read in *The Alabama Baptist* about missions work around the world, inspiring them to do more. For that reason and many more, I consider *The Alabama Baptist* to be a great blessing and a tremendous partner in ministry.

CONNECTING
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Read
The Alabama Baptist Day
is Sunday,
July 29.

"As our people participate in missions, they read in *The Alabama Baptist* about missions work around the world, inspiring them to do more."

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Judson College alums labor as archivists

Huntsville-area chapter Judson College alumnae like JoAnn Bugg (front) and Sylvia Bailey volunteer their time to catalog documents from college archives.

Judson librarian and archivist Andrea Abernathy said the college was "profoundly grateful" for the contribution of the Huntsville chapter alumnae, who used their knowledge and memories to help preserve some of the college's photographic history.

The volunteers returned to Judson's campus to help Abernathy identify and place pictures from events such as J-Day, the college's annual alumnae meeting. (JC, TAB)



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Want to see your news in *The Alabama Baptist*?

E-mail your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org; fax it to 205-870-8957 or call 1-800-803-5201. Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



FINAL IN A SERIES

Baptists RESPOND

to areas devastated by April 2011 tornadoes

Alabama Baptists help rebuild, restore District 12

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For the past year, *The Alabama Baptist* has taken readers around the state to visit each association and learn more about the impact of the deadly storms of April 2011.

The final destination in the year-long journey is the Southern Baptist Convention's District 12 region of the state. It includes Autauga, Chilton, Coosa, Elmore, Lowndes and Montgomery counties.

The event that precipitated this journey was April 27, 2011, when more than 60 cyclones traversed Alabama, leaving an imprint on two-thirds of the state and claiming approximately 272 lives.

Autauga Association

A deadly tornado struck Autauga County on April 15, 2011, taking three lives and damaging approximately 75 homes. The tornado also hit Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville.

Chaplains and chain saw teams from Autauga, Montgomery, Elmore and Chilton associations responded.

Autauga Association helped people find another place to live or purchase modular homes.

In addition, various congregations worked on their own to help storm victims recover. For example, East Memorial Baptist Church, Prattville, helped to build a home for a family.

"Our churches were very involved," said Bill Morgan, director of missions (DOM) for Autauga Baptist Association.

The churches stepped up again to assist people affected by the storms of April 27, 2011.

First Baptist Church, Prattville, served as a collection site for supplies that were sent to north Alabama.

"We (also) sent numerous teams to help" in affected areas, Morgan said.

Volunteers from Autauga Association worked in Pratt City, Rainsville, Tuscaloosa, Pleasant Grove, Hackleburg and other places. They served in disaster relief child care, chaplaincy, chain saw and food service.



Photo courtesy of FBC Montgomery

'FRIENDS BRINGING CARE' — Disaster relief volunteers from FBC Montgomery help clean up debris after the April 27, 2011, tornadoes devastated the state.

Members from First, Prattville, volunteered for rebuild efforts in Pleasant Grove, and individuals from other churches made trips to assist as well.

In Autauga Association, Boone's

Chapel Baptist is now under construction, Morgan said.

The new facility will feature a "safe room" able to accommodate more than 100 people, he added.

More than a year after the tragedy, "we're still doing case management to see if there are any unmet needs," Morgan said. This effort is coordinated through the Autauga (See 'Alabama,' page 6)

District 12

Central Association

Elmore Association

Montgomery Association

Autauga Association

Chilton Association

Explanation of districts

Alabama's 75 associations are grouped into 12 geographical districts. The districts allow the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions to work with and offer resources in a more localized way. Each district has various state missionaries assigned to it. When there are meetings or workshops that need to take place with all associational leaders, the district setup allows for a more practical model for those events. The April 27, 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. This week's feature completes the coverage of all districts.

Highlights from District 12

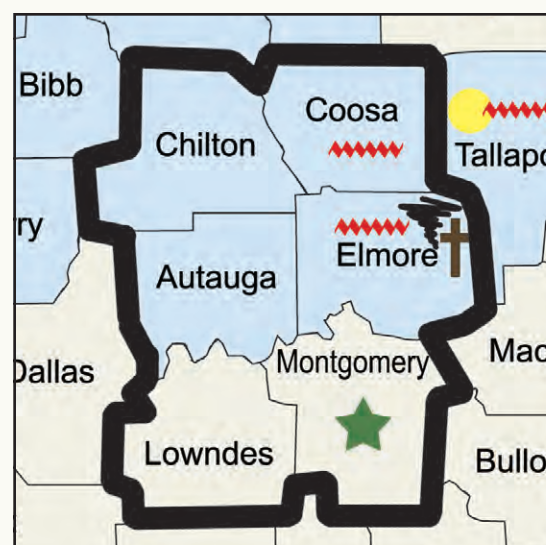
State disaster relief efforts in the area (shown by county)

2 of the 5 associations (6 counties) have Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts focused on them.

★ Main command center

✝ 1 mobile chapel

✶ 1 Alabama Baptist church destroyed



Alabama churches, associations minister in time

(continued from page 5)

Long Term Recovery Committee, of which Morgan is chairman. Autauga Association assists through the committee.

Morgan said opportunities remain to reach people who are open to the gospel message.

Evangelistic visits and events are needed, as well as follow-up to minister to those still hurting.

This season of assisting during a crisis has "been a spiritual renewal for our folks who have gone to help," Morgan said. It has increased awareness that life is not about things but about God.

Central Association

There was no significant damage in Central Baptist Association resulting from the April 27, 2011, storm system.

However, a tornado 12 days prior greatly affected Equality in Coosa County, said DOM Wayne Henderson.

The association — which has churches in Coosa, Tallapoosa, Talladega and Clay counties — provided breakfast and lunch for people in need, utility workers and others. Henderson said Bethesda Baptist Church, Equality, opened its facilities to serve breakfast and a community group helped cook.

Ray Baker, Bethesda's pastor, assisted in coordinating cleanup and repair efforts in the Equality area.

After the April 27 cyclones, Rockford Baptist Church became a collection site for supplies to send to areas of need. "The youth in the church were very active in that," Henderson said.

In addition, Weogufka Second Baptist Church formed a partnership with Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, in Marion Baptist Association, Henderson said.

Hackleburg was severely damaged by the storms, and Emmanuel Baptist is being rebuilt.

Weogufka Second Baptist designated this year's Vacation Bible School offering to help Emmanuel Baptist.

Henderson believes it is likely that all churches of Central Association in some way assisted people affected by the storms. Some helped through direct ministry and service while others donated funds or items.

This time of crisis, though painful and tragic, allowed individuals who are without Jesus Christ to see that people in churches really do love and care about them and their needs, Henderson said.



Photo courtesy of Montgomery Baptist Association

QUICK RESPONSE — Volunteers from Montgomery Baptist Association help with debris removal in areas of need following the April 27, 2011, tornadoes. The association also responded to the January 2012 tornadoes that hit Center Point and Trussville.

"It has given us great opportunity to do that," he noted.

Chilton Association

"We had minimal damage here," said Larry Felkins, DOM for Chilton Baptist Association. "It kind of skirted around us" on April 27, 2011.

Though Chilton essentially escaped harm that day, Felkins was in a different part of the state at the time and saw destruction happening firsthand.

His father — Ray Felkins, a former pastor and former DOM for Bethel and Hale associations — had died the previous day. Felkins was at his parents' home in Tuscaloosa and watched the tornado move along 15th Street.

"We could see the tornado. We could hear it. You could see in the air the debris," Felkins said.

In the aftermath of the cyclone that affected so much of the state, Chilton's disaster relief

volunteers responded by working in Trussville, Bessemer, Oak Grove and Tuscaloosa, Felkins said.

Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton, became a drop-off location for supplies needed in damaged areas, Felkins said. A number of churches in the association contributed.

Also volunteers from Chilton Association went to Crossroad Baptist Church, Hueytown, in Mud Creek Baptist Association to deliver supplies.

Recently a group from Chilton Association worked in Phil Campbell, helping to rebuild Mountain View Baptist Church in Franklin Association.

In January 2012, a tornado swept through Chilton, causing damage in Maplesville, Mount Pleasant and Lomax. Then a few weeks later, another hit Verbena, Felkins said.

Chilton Association's disaster relief volunteers responded after both storms. Also volunteers from Selma Association worked in Maplesville and Clanton.

Maplesville Baptist Church and Liberty Hill Baptist prepared meals for affected individuals and volunteers. In addition Liberty Hill Baptist assisted people with putting tarps on roofs.

Verbena Baptist Church ministered in its community in a variety of ways, Felkins said. Other churches also helped people recover.

Because of Chilton's rural environment, many people have chain saws and tractors available. So when a disaster strikes, "people get out and go to work," Felkins said.

"We have equipment that people in urban areas don't have."

In many cases residents are able to take care of their own situation and help others too.

Neighbors respond and the disaster relief team responds, Felkins said. "We just do it ourselves."

Plus "the local church doesn't wait for a call," he said. "They just get it done."

Felkins said it was encouraging to see people assist friends, neighbors and people they did not know. "Folks just showed up and took care of it."

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.sbdr.org.

To contact specific associations, call:

► Autauga Baptist Association, 334-365-7802;

► Central Baptist Association, 256-377-2411;

► Chilton Baptist Association, 205-755-3188;

► Elmore Baptist Association, 334-567-7321; or

► Montgomery Baptist Association, 334-271-6227. (TAB)

FBC Montgomery continues to meet needs more than a year later

After the April 2011 tornadoes, volunteers from First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association assisted in areas of impact and continue to do so more than a year later.

Volunteers ministered in Tuscaloosa, Fort Payne, Eclectic and Birmingham, said Brian Gay, minister of missions for First, Montgomery.

Every weekend for five weeks after the storms, teams went out to help.

They provided relief services while ministering to and sharing the gospel with people, Gay said.

After that initial effort, the church served as a liaison, connecting individuals to places where work was needed.

In the first few weeks after the storms, the church sent out more than 100 volunteers. That figure represents only those who went through the church for assignments. Some individuals may have responded on their own.

The church also served as a hub for collections and distributions to other regions.

The act of meeting needs and ministering to people is continuing. "We're still involved to this day," Gay noted.

People of the church are assisting in rebuilding Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, in Elmore Baptist Association and expect to be involved until completion. "And possibly beyond that," Gay added. (TAB)

After the disasters, the association provided some financial assistance to churches to aid people, Felkins said.

"I'm sure some of our churches did the same kind of thing."

Elmore Association

When Jim Jackson, DOM for Elmore Baptist Association, was asked to describe the situation in his county following the deadly tornadoes of April 2011, the word he used was "shock."

The path of the storms, Jackson explained, went through the middle part of the county, leaving much devastation.

Six people died, according to news reports. Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, also suffered great damage.

Jackson said that in the 21 years he has been in the county Elmore has never been hit as hard as it was April 27, 2011.

The association's disaster relief teams —

of crisis

which are based at First Baptist Church, Tallassee; First Baptist Church, Wetumpka and Thelma Baptist Church, Wetumpka — went to areas of greater destruction, such as Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, Jackson said.

Locally, however, individuals from the community and volunteers from churches and organizations worked in Elmore County to help affected people.

“So many people came in as volunteers,” Jackson said.

To meet needs of people affected by the storms, the association has worked through a community organization to use donated funds, Jackson said. More than a year removed from the storms, “there are still needs that crop up; but (they’ve) become less and less.”

Current efforts are focused on rebuilding Mount Hebron East, which met at Prospect Baptist Church, Eclectic, and at a fire department before receiving a mobile chapel from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association has made a strong commitment to Mount Hebron East, as did First Baptist Church, Lloyd, Fla., Jackson said. The response of Christians during this time met many needs and touched many lives. As a result, some individuals asked Jesus Christ to be their Savior and others came to be involved in churches. Jackson added there is a greater awareness of who Baptists are and what they do.

“I want the churches of our association to be seen as the presence of Christ,” he said.

It is also his desire that the association and local agencies — working through Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster — can increase their readiness for the next disaster.

“We weren’t as prepared as we needed to be,” Jackson said.

As for ministering to people, he said there is still work for Christians to do. Emotional needs not related to an actual storm continue to exist in the community, waiting to be addressed.

“There are disasters behind every front door,” Jackson said, referring to spiritual and emotional storms in life. “(We need to) find ways as churches to respond to disasters in families and lives.”

Montgomery Association

Disaster relief volunteers from Montgomery Baptist Association — which includes Montgomery and eastern Lowndes counties — responded quickly to areas of need.

DOM Ken May said the disaster relief team went to Tuscaloosa and the feeding unit to Sand Mountain.

May also met with pastors of Bessemer Baptist Association to offer assistance through their churches. He said Montgomery Association aided one church in financially helping a family.

At First Baptist Church, Montgomery, needed supplies were collected. Teams of volunteers delivered the items to impacted areas.

In addition, churches reached out on their own to minister to individuals affected by the storms.

In January 2012 the association’s disaster relief team responded as well after a deadly tornado struck in Center Point and Trussville, he said.

May emphasized the importance of receiving training now and earning the proper credentials in order to enter a disaster area the next time a crisis occurs. “Just lending a hand is a big thing,” May said.

Elmore Association volunteers ‘ready and able to go’ following April 2011 tornadoes

Three Elmore Baptist Association churches currently serve as headquarters for the association’s disaster relief work.

A fourth church is in the process of forming a unit that will utilize the newest expansion in the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ (SBOM) disaster relief ministry.

The three current churches in the association are First Baptist Church, Tallassee; First Baptist Church, Wetumpka; and Thelma Baptist Church, Wetumpka, said Jim Jackson, Elmore Association’s director of missions.

Although these three churches are headquarters for disaster relief teams, the teams do include volunteers from other churches.

The group at First, Tallassee, has been together since before Hurricane Katrina, said Frank Autery, disaster relief team leader for the church and disaster relief coordinator for Elmore Association. The 46 active members are trained in recovery, chain saw, shower unit, chaplaincy and food service.

“Our church has our own equipment and trailer,” Autery said.

Responding to the call

Between April 15 and July in 2011 the group was deployed seven times to assist in areas affected by deadly tornadoes. During that time members served in Eclectic, Alexander City, Moody, Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Hueytown, Equality and Rainsville.

In January 2012 it responded to a tornado at Eagle Creek in Tallapoosa County, Autery added.

The group is “ready and able to go whenever called. We’re usually one of the first ones deployed” or placed on standby, he said.

In addition to its commitment to cleanup and recovery, the group at First, Wetump-

ka, has assumed a role as a Rapid Response Assessment Team (RRAT), said Larry Teel, the church’s unit coordinator and a member of the SBOM’s disaster relief task force.

Within 24 hours of an incident, RRATs go into an area to assess the need for more relief and other services, Teel explained.

The day after the April 27, 2011, tornadoes, part of the team from First, Wetumpka, went to Tuscaloosa, while other members responded to needs in Elmore County.

“I was (in Tuscaloosa) for about a month, in and out, with members of the team,” Teel said.

In March 2012 the team, which has 23 members, volunteered in Jacksons Gap in Tallapoosa County after a tornado struck.

First, Wetumpka, formed its team in 1979 when Hurricane Frederic hit Mobile, Teel said.

“(That same year) our state convention began planning efforts to purchase resources and establish a disaster relief ministry in Alabama,” explained Mel Johnson, state missionary and disaster relief strategist with SBOM.

In 2004 and 2005 alone, the team of First, Wetumpka, responded to 27 incidents.

Teel said the team serves people who need help. But the ultimate goal is to share the love of Jesus Christ with the hurting.

At Thelma Baptist, 48 people serve in disaster relief, said Les Brown, interim coordinator. The members are trained in mud-out, cleanup, chain saw, chaplaincy, food service, administration and child care.

The team is fairly young, having been started in 2010.

“We had been involved in disaster relief kind of ad hoc,” Brown said.

Individuals assisted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, but the team really came together as members trained for a possible disaster relief trip to Haiti.

Members of the church had taken missions trips “all over the world,” Brown said, so disaster relief was naturally the next step.

Following the April 2011 tornadoes, the

team worked in Elmore County and Tuscaloosa, Brown reported. Then following tornado activity in January 2012, it served in Trussville and Pelham.

Recently the team worked with some from First, Wetumpka, responding after a windstorm left damage in Dadeville.

New ‘skid steer’ team

The members of Thelma Baptist generously aided the work of the team.

“We get a lot of support from the congregation monetarily,” Brown said.

The fourth team in the association is being organized at Santuck Baptist Church, Wetumpka, according to Ted Watts Sr.

Watts believes the team will be ready within the next 60 days. This team will be a “skid steer” group, meaning it will provide and operate heavy equipment that will enhance cleanup efforts.

Johnson said skid steer resources are the newest expansion in the state’s disaster relief ministry.

“These new pieces of equipment will allow the work of our chain saw teams to be many times more efficient and effective,” he said.

“This allows for more homeowners to receive ministry (and) thus more opportunities to share Christ. Once disaster assessment is completed and teams are dispatched to crisis locations, skid steers will be deployed to support the cleanup and recovery crews.

“I am also pleased that these new resources are among the much-needed equipment being added to the fleet as a result of the special disaster relief offering challenge our churches participated in earlier this year,” Johnson continued.

“The generous offering support is yet another way our churches have participated alongside our disaster relief personnel to make a difference.”

For information on the offering, visit www.sbd.org. (TAB)

Eclectic’s Central Baptist continues recovery efforts

Scott Wilson had been pastor of Central Baptist Church, Eclectic, in Elmore Baptist Association just a few weeks when a tornado struck in April 2011.

Not only had he been in the South only a short time, but he also had not been part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) very long. Nor had he ever experienced a tornado.

Prior to becoming pastor of Central Baptist, Wilson — originally from upstate New York — had been at an independent Baptist church in Massachusetts.

As a tornado approached the area near Central Baptist, Wilson saw the huge dark cloud moving along the ground.

“I’d never seen anything like it,” he said.

As soon as it was safe to be outside Wilson and others checked on older church members and those who might have been in the path of the storm.

“We actually found some people screaming underneath a wall,” Wilson said.

Every day for about a month, Central Baptist members cut trees and made re-

pairs both for people who were part of the church and people who were not.

First Baptist Church, Eclectic, opened its doors to individuals left homeless and Central Baptist assisted that church, Wilson said. He also noted that Central Baptist had food and clothes in its family life center to help fulfill needs.

Community involvement

The care and concern that people and churches demonstrated made an impression on Wilson.

“Everybody was trying to check on everybody,” he said. As they rode by areas of destruction and saw other people, the passersby would ask if anyone needed help or food.

For a few weeks, people of the community seemed to suspend their own lives in order to assist others, Wilson said. “It was something to see.”

But he was also encouraged to see how the SBC, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Alabama Baptist churches responded in a time of crisis. He was

impressed by the groups’ cooperation.

“I’d never seen the way churches work together, like they were one,” Wilson said, adding they were working together in the manner that the body of Christ is supposed to function.

It was not just the local churches either. SBC churches from across the state called Central Baptist to offer assistance. Wilson said that at one point there was almost too much help.

“So many people wanted to work,” he said.

After more than a year, Central Baptist continues to be involved in the recovery effort by offering lodging to volunteers coming into the area to rebuild Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic.

Wilson has taken note of the cohesiveness, the tender hearts and the care for the hurting that he has seen among the people and the churches.

“I was very happily impressed that I had made the right decision to become Southern Baptist,” he said. (TAB)



Photo by Amy Fray

SHELTER — The new structure for Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, will feature a 'safe room' that will hold about 100 people. The room will be open to the community.

A safe place Boone's Chapel continues to rebuild, reach community

The EF3 tornado that struck April 15, 2011, moved the sanctuary of Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, off its slab.

The preschool and children's wing was severely damaged and ultimately was razed, added Mike Johnson, pastor of the Autauga Baptist Association church.

For worship services, members are meeting in the church's multipurpose building.

The congregation decided to rebuild the preschool and children's wing, only bigger, Johnson said.

"We upped the size considerably."

The 17,000-square-foot structure will also house administrative offices and feature a "safe room" that will hold about 100 people and will be made available to the community.

Concern for others

The safe room is made of concrete and reinforced steel, with a 12-inch-thick ceiling, Johnson explained.

The congregation wanted this feature because a lot of homes in the community do not have a safe



Photo by Amy Fray

UPPING THE SIZE — Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville, rebuilds after it was severely damaged by a tornado that hit the area April 15, 2011. The new building is expected to be finished in September.

place where people can take shelter during a storm.

"They really responded to the community" by including the new safe room, said Bill Morgan, director of missions for Autauga Association.

Gov. Robert Bentley allocated \$66,000 from his emergency relief fund to help pay for the safe room and ABC Concrete donated some of its services.

The new building is expected to be finished in September, Johnson said.

The storm's damage allowed the

church to strategize for the future. The larger size for the preschool and children's wing takes into account the 8,300 homes within a five-mile radius of the church.

Preparing for the future

Currently the church has a Wednesday outreach for children and youth that requires a large space. Also Johnson said the church plans to start a mother's day out program in the fall because that seems to be a need in the community.

The storm also appears to have

had other, positive impacts on the church.

Since the storm, Boone's Chapel Baptist has added a second morning worship service on Sundays, baptized a number of adults and has increased in Sunday School enrollment.

In addition, Johnson and some others in the church completed disaster relief training in the areas of chaplaincy, chain saw and food service.

"I see the need," Johnson said. "There's always going to be need." (TAB)

Sgt. Hollon protects daughter, loses life

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

That familiar passage of John 15:13 illustrates how a Christian should live while also calling to remembrance that Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for each of us.

During a tornado April 15, 2011, U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Steven Hollon protected his young daughter at the cost of his own life.

In April 2012, the Air Force acknowledged Hollon's heroism by presenting the Airman's Medal to his family.

'Voluntary risk of life'

According to information provided by Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, the Airman's Medal is given for an act of heroism that involves "voluntary risk of life under circumstances other than conflict."

The medal was presented to Hollon's widow, Karen, and an identical one was given to his mother, Sara Hollon.

At the time of the deadly tornado, 41-year-old Hollon and his family had returned from England, where he had been stationed. Hollon was on terminal leave from the military and was scheduled to retire officially on May 1, 2011.

Hollon had served in the Air Force 22 years and was a Desert Storm veteran, according to the Air Force base.

The family was staying with Sara Hollon and her husband, Willard, in the Boone's Chapel community near Prattville until their own home was completed next door.

Sgt. Hollon, Karen and their two daughters — Renae and Faith — had planned to join East Memorial Baptist Church, Prattville, the following Sunday, Sara Hollon said.

On April 15, 2011, the two families tried to stay apprised of the weather situation and thought the storm had passed them, said Sara Hollon, a member of East Memorial Baptist.

However, "it came on us without us realizing it was there," she recounted.

The storm not only claimed the

life of Sgt. Hollon, but also that of his father, Willard, and his sister, Cheryl Mitchell, who lived beside her parents.

In only a few moments the storm had taken Sara Hollon's husband and two of her four children.

Sara Hollon said reports from rescuers indicated that Sgt. Hollon had acted as a shield, protecting his daughter, Faith, who was 10 years old at the time.

"It was like he was shielding her body from the walls coming in on her," Sara Hollon said. "Her safety was upmost in his mind."

Air University Commander Lt. Gen. David Fadok concurred.

"We can all learn a lot from his actions," information from the Air Force base quoted Lt. Gen. Fadok.

"To give your own life to save another is the ultimate sacrifice and the Air Force is a better place because of people like Steve Hollon." (TAB)

Montgomery's Vaughn Forest Baptist quick to respond

Montgomery Baptist Association's disaster relief team is housed at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery.

According to Norm Bell, outreach minister at the church, the team consists of 65 people, six of whom come from other churches.

"We're basically a chain saw (and) cleanup crew," Bell said. "Probably a third of our team are women."

Russell Ray of Vaughn Forest Baptist coordinates the team's efforts with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Bell said. "He really does a big job."

The church has provided all the necessary equipment and allows it to be stored there. Some heavy machinery is also available for the group's use.

Equipped to go

When the team is called to respond to a disaster, it simply has to hook up its equipment trailer and go, Bell said.

In a major event, Vaughn Forest's group is generally one of

the first to be called upon to deploy.

Ken May, director of missions for Montgomery Association, said the team is quick to respond locally and elsewhere.

Disaster relief response

Among the incidents to which the group has responded are Hurricanes Katrina, Ivan and Ike, a tornado in Enterprise and an ice storm in Missouri.

After the outbreak of tornadoes in April 2011, the team served in Eclectic, Tuscaloosa and Rainsville.

Vaughn Forest Baptist formed the team about eight years ago to assist in times of crisis.

Bell said people who are hurting are more open to the gospel of Jesus Christ when their needs are being met.

Through disaster relief, the group has seen individuals ask Jesus Christ into their heart. And neighbors who have seen compassion ministry done in Jesus' name may have also accepted Him as Savior, Bell said. (TAB)

'We're not giving up'

Tornado sweeps away church building but leaves church body with stronger faith

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

We're gonna make a statement and it's gonna be, 'We're not giving up; we're going on.'" It was a determined declaration made by a pastor who, in the midst of devastation, realized there was a bigger picture for his church.

That testimony — delivered by Pastor Bob Williamson shortly after an EF4 tornado swept away Mount Hebron East Baptist Church near Eclectic the evening of April 27, 2011 — has since taken shape as the church has begun the rebuilding process.

At the time the tornado hit, Williamson had been pastor for only seven weeks. He and his wife, Vicky, retired from the International Mission Board after more than two decades of service in South Africa.

In the storm's wake, it left only the foundation slab from the fellowship hall. The building was

connected to the church and was only 2 and a half years old.

"We prayed to seek the will of the Lord and believed the Lord wanted us to have a little vision," Williamson said, adding the church accepted the challenge to rebuild and enlarge rather than merely restore the former buildings.

"I'm very proud of [the people] to seek His will," he shared.

The former worship building seated about 70 people. Williamson said the new building will accommodate about 130 people and will have two extra rooms and a baptistry, something the former building did not have.

Since the tornado hit the church, the congregation has been worshipping in a mobile chapel provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The mobile chapel is located on church property.

Williamson recalled how a man in a neighboring county was plow-

"We prayed to seek the will of the Lord and believed the Lord wanted us to have a little vision."

**Pastor Bob Williamson
Mount Hebron East
Baptist Church, Eclectic**



Photo by Doug Rogers

'WE'RE GOING ON' — The April 27, 2011, tornado that destroyed Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, left only the foundation slab from the fellowship hall. The church has been worshipping in a mobile chapel provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions seen here in the background.

ing his field one day after the tornado and discovered that the powerful storm had dropped Mount Hebron East Baptist's sign onto his property. The man and his family transported the sign back and presented it to the church during the first service held in the mobile chapel.

According to Williamson, church members and other donors have contributed a significant amount to the building fund. Several area churches have contributed financially, and Prospect Baptist Church, Eclectic, hosted a Gaither-style gospel singing that raised several thousand dollars.

"We had ... a full house [at the event]," Prospect Baptist Pastor David Jones said.

According to Jones, Eclectic is a tightknit community and his church desired to reach out and help meet Mount Hebron East's needs.

He added that Prospect is blessed with musical talent and wanted to utilize those gifts to be a blessing to others after the storm.

Williamson said the Lord is showing that He wants the Mount Hebron East building in the com-

munity as a witness, and he added the church has even experienced a bit of growth since last year.

New building

The church worked with an architect to determine the best use of land and is currently constructing the new building.

Williamson reported that in the next two weeks several phases — including finishing the roof — will be completed.

Many groups have volunteered to help in the rebuilding efforts,

including Carpenters for Christ construction groups and various churches both near Mount Hebron East Baptist and throughout the state. Churches from outside the state are sending teams to help as well.

"I've seen a demonstration of the Lord building our faith," Williamson said.

"The circumstances we go through either weaken our faith or strengthen our faith. ... I've seen a strengthening of faith of our people."

"The circumstances we go through either weaken our faith or strengthen our faith. ... I've seen a strengthening of faith of our people."

**Pastor Bob Williamson
Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic**



Photo by Joni B. Hannigan

LEVELED — The April 27, 2011, tornado that tore through Elmore County severely damaged the cemetery of Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, in Elmore Baptist Association.

To stay up to date with Alabama Baptist disaster relief efforts, visit

www.sbdr.org.



Westmoreland challenges Judson graduates to 'build a joyous life'

Family, students and friends filled Alumnae Auditorium on the campus of Judson College in Marion on June 23 for the college's 174th annual commencement.

Judson College President David Potts presided and awarded diplomas to the graduating seniors and noted that the class of 2012 had distinguished themselves in and out of the classroom.

"I know I say this every year, but this is an outstanding group of young women," Potts said. "Not only has this class excelled academically, but this group has served in remarkable numbers. A record 85 percent of this class has engaged in outreach, ministry and service-learning."

Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford University in Birmingham, served as commencement speaker.

Westmoreland laughingly called himself a "bona fide commencement professional" since he had participated in some 85 commencement ceremonies, noting that most of the addresses he had heard or delivered himself had been unremarkable.

'Three simple ideas'

"Though I'm not a Baptist preacher, I want to give you three simple ideas today," Westmoreland said. "They are simple enough to remember but important enough to build a joyous life."

"First," he said, "you must look up to Christ." Westmoreland noted the Judson graduates had the advantage of a Christ-centered education that, he said, was endangered in a secular world. "You've been taught to honor God," he said. "This is primary in life."

Second Westmoreland exhorted his audience to "look down," noting



Photo by Bill Mathews

OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP — Judson College President David Potts (right) greets Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland prior to Westmoreland's commencement address at Judson on June 23.

that the students must "stay grounded" and never forget who they are.

Third Westmoreland urged the class to "look all around."

"You must see, feel and reach a world crying out for help," he said. "The world can be across the globe or it can be next door. This class has done a good job in reaching out to others."

Westmoreland singled out four graduates for recognition, asking them to stand as he gave accounts of their particular areas of service.

After conferring student degrees, Potts presented an honorary degree to Judson alumna Louise Wilkins Williams, of Birmingham.

Potts presented the national Algernon Sydney Sullivan Non-Student Award to Westmoreland, noting Samford's outreach in Perry County and Westmoreland's leadership in encouraging more state Baptist convention funds to go to Judson and the University of Mobile.

Bethany Rush, of Thomasville,

received the Sullivan Student Award.

Laney Jolley, of Hartselle, received the J.C. Faulkner Award, and Molly Beasley, of Cottonwood, received the Bible Award for outstanding Christian service.

Audra Kennedy, of Morris, won the Scholarship Award for having the highest academic average in her class — a perfect 4.0.

Psychology professor Harold Arnold was awarded the Lula and Alton Holley Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching. (JC)

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.



Photo courtesy of Round Island Baptist Church

ROUND ISLAND BAPTIST MARKS 195 YEARS

Pastor Mike Green of Round Island Baptist Church, Athens, speaks at the church's 195th anniversary. Mike McLemore, executive director for Birmingham Baptist Association, was the guest speaker. The church was founded June 17, 1817.



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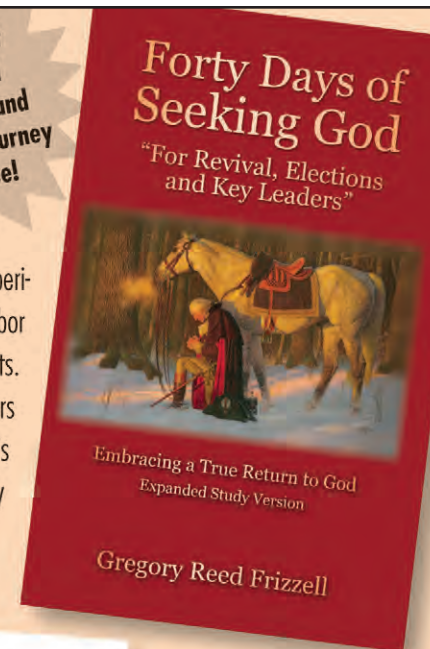
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'All peoples from all cultures'

SBC entities seek ways to be ethnically diverse in their ministries, programs

(continued from page 1)

and leaders can participate more fully in SBC life, the results of which led to passage of the historic measures for tracking accountability. The EC has worked with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to establish ethnic-focused positions and groups, including a presidential ambassador for ethnic church relations and Hispanic and African-American advisory councils. The EC also has extended the ethnic reach of Baptist Press through a broader freelance writer base and an expanded Spanish-language version of the online news service.

► **International Mission Board (IMB):** The IMB's Church and Partner Services Office has three departments that relate to African-American, Hispanic and Korean-American churches. The IMB has several ethnic trustees and staff members and several hundred ethnic missionaries, and it hosts events in majority-ethnic churches and communities.

Church-planting pastors

► **North American Mission Board:** Through its Send North America strategy, NAMB has introduced church-planting pastors to several ethnic groups, including Polish, Brazilian, Haitian, Romanian, African, Jewish, Mainland Chinese and African-American. NAMB in concert with the EC appointed Ken Weathersby, an African-American, as the presidential ambassador for ethnic church relations.

► **LifeWay Christian Resources:** Life-

Way reported it is "constantly alert to opportunities that present ways to help spiritually transform all peoples from all cultures and backgrounds by offering biblical solutions for life." These include the Church Resources Division's evangelism and discipleship resources in 20 languages and extensive products for ethnic churches and leaders sold at 165 LifeWay Christian Stores in the United States and online.

LifeWay's B&H Publishing Group publishes or licenses products in more than 25 languages and is the world's largest commercial publisher of Spanish Bibles. LifeWay Research helps churches understand and engage individuals of many ethnicities, utilizing multiple languages in analyzing primary research.

At LifeWay's Technology Division, Bible translations in all languages are available online. LifeWay employs "hundreds of members of minorities and regularly attends minority job/career fairs for minority groups, and advertises for particular ethnic minorities on the Internet and through mailings to individuals and churches," the entity reported.

► **GuideStone Financial Resources:** GuideStone said it is actively working to attract ethnic churches and their leaders to participate in and partner with its programs, maintaining websites in Spanish and Korean and a call center that can assist callers in more than 100 languages. GuideStone's resources are printed in a variety of languages, including Chinese, Vietnamese and French Haitian. GuideStone also highlighted two of "sev-

eral" minorities employed in management.

► **Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC):** The ERLC focuses on human rights and immigration issues, "where racial and ethnic peoples are most often the center of debate," the ERLC said. The commission has honored ethnic minorities with its distinguished service and religious liberty awards and has published the Internet site www.erlc.com/race.

Ethnically diverse campuses

► **Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (GGBTS):** GGBTS reported an ethnically diverse campus with ethnic students, faculty, staff, trustees and ministry leaders. Its 2010-11 student body was 36.3 percent white, 21.4 percent Hispanic, 19.4 percent African-American and 12.6 percent Asian-American, among others. Korean-, Indian-, Canadian- and African-Americans are among faculty, and the seminary reported it enjoys relationships with a diversity of church leaders.

► **Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS):** MBTS offers leadership development programs targeting Lao, Hispanic and Korean students. The seminary reaches its African-American neighbors through African-American church emphasis programs and evangelism teams.

► **New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS):** NOBTS serves a diverse student population and includes ethnic minorities in its full-time and adjunct faculty.

The seminary partners with various churches and the majority-African-American National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. to offer certificates in African-American church planting and offers certificate and undergraduate programs to ethnic minorities in prisons in Louisiana, Mississippi and Georgia.

► **Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS):** SEBTS "has been making active efforts to increase the participation of ethnic churches and church leaders in the life [of] the seminary. While major percentage gains have not been seen, SEBTS is seeing growth in the ethnic student population," the seminary reported. Inviting ethnic minorities to speak at chapel services and actively seeking qualified professors for faculty positions were reported.

► **Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS):** SBTS "proactively seeks to hire faculty and administrative staff from diverse ethnic backgrounds," the seminary reported, and has recommended names of ethnic leaders to the SBC Committee on Nominations when invited to do so. The seminary works to attract students from various ethnicities and offers instruction and graduate supervision in Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean.

► **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS):** SWBTS reported that it employs an ethnically diverse faculty. The seminary reaches a diverse audience through its annual picnic attended by multiple ethnic churches and groups, and by inviting ethnic church leaders to speak at seminary events. (BP)

Starting a new church is a great challenge and a great blessing. It is often the most difficult, yet rewarding experience that a Christian leader will ever face. Some leaders will refuse the challenge and the blessing as well, believing that they are not equipped to plant a new church.

BASIC TRAINING JOURNEY FOR CHURCH PLANTERS

Your State Board of Missions believes that God doesn't just call the equipped, but that He equips the called. That's why we are inviting church planters and their mentors to the Basic Training Journey for Church Planters workshop, **August 23-25**, at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

During this workshop, church planting teams will explore the spiritual foundations for church planting, learn to cast a vision for the congregational identity of the new church, and discover how to actually launch and grow a new church plant.

This workshop is a chance to learn about the nuts and bolts of planting a new church. Even more, it is a time for church planters and their mentors to pray and think about the details of how

this new congregation will reach new people for Christ's kingdom. It is also an opportunity to network with other church planting teams and discover how they have overcome similar challenges in their settings.

This year, it is even more exciting because it will be held as a part of this summer's Missions University. The Missions University is an effort to bring together missional workers from all over Alabama to a synergistic training event. It will be a wonderful time of equipping and networking!

Because this event is supported by gifts of Alabama Baptist churches to missions through the Cooperative

Program, the cost for this challenging training event is only \$25 per person!

To register, go online to www.alsbom.org/missionsuniversity or contact Ministry Assistant Brenda Niblett at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 244, or (334) 613-2244, bniblett@alsbom.org.



By Otis Corbitt
State Missionary

For more information about training for church planters, contact State Missionary Otis Corbitt in the Office of Associational Missions & Church Planting: 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, ocorbitt@alsbom.org.



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

Stepping out in faith

Alabama Baptists helping college open in Vermont, hoping to reach New England for Christ

A college with strong Southern Baptist ties is preparing to open in Vermont, the least-churched state in the nation, with a goal of training church planters for service in New England.

Northeastern Baptist College, with classes set to start in August 2013 in Bennington, Vt., will require all faculty and students to sign and uphold the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Southern Baptists' statement of faith.

The school recently formalized a partnership with the Green Mountain Baptist Association in Vermont and is cooperating with the Baptist Convention of New England.

Mark Ballard, Northeastern's president, told Baptist Press the school will help address a main problem in the task of reaching New England for Christ.

Few return home

When God calls residents of New England to the gospel ministry, he said, they often travel south for college and seminary, intending to return home for service. Instead many settle in the South, and few go back to New England as pastors and church planters, Ballard said.

Traditionally Baptist colleges have been funded by Baptist state conventions. The Baptist Convention of New England, though, has a little more than 300 churches for all six New England states, and about

two-thirds of its budget comes from outside New England through the North American Mission Board and LifeWay Christian Resources, Ballard said.

"We're kind of in this catch-22. Everybody knows we need a Baptist college here so we can train students and keep them here, but the problem is our convention is not strong enough to support a college like that," Ballard, a longtime New England church planter, said. "In order for us to get strong enough to support a college like that, we've got to have workers here."

The circular problem is part of what God used to convince Ballard that he needed to help start an accredited four-year school.

"Somebody has got to have faith and step out," he said. "For a long time I prayed somebody would, and I didn't think it would be me. I didn't necessarily want it to be me initially, but that was God's call, and I said, 'OK.'"

While offering bachelor's degrees in biblical studies, music and education, Northeastern will focus

on helping students develop "the mind of a scholar, the heart of a shepherd and the perseverance of a soldier."

In addition to classroom time, students will gain practical ministry experience by serving in churches alongside area pastors or in the K-12 Christian school that is housed in the same building as the college.

"One of the things every church planter in New England that I know of is starving for is more help," said Ballard, a former president of the Baptist Convention of New England and a former LifeWay trustee. "Practical experience is good for the student, but in New England, it's critical for the churches."

For students in the biblical studies track, there is a unique emphasis on church planting and entrepreneurial leadership. Ballard recognizes that one of the challenges church planters face is funding, so he is assembling some of the best entrepreneurs he can find to teach students how to make money

when they are serving on the field.

"What we're trying to do through a few of our classes in that program is help our church planters gain the principles so they can go into an area and quickly assess what they can do to offset their income when they need to in order to stay on task for the church planting effort," Ballard said.

Because the local association and the state convention are not in positions to fund the school, Ballard is "trying to tell the story far and wide and praying that the Lord will touch the hearts of people to help us."

Paige Patterson, Jimmy Draper and Fred Luter are among the Southern Baptist leaders who have provided endorsements for Northeastern Baptist College.

"The fact of the matter is what we're attempting here is the impossible," Ballard said. "We all know the debt that our country owes to New England. The Baptist Faith and Message is built on the New Hampshire Confession. We all know what D.L. Moody did here. We all know about the Great Awakenings. Yet we also know that today the Northeast is the most unchurched (region in the United States).

"Vermont is the self-proclaimed least churched state in the nation. Fifteen miles from where I'm sitting on campus is the site of the Haystack Revival, yet you look around today and see the devastation," Ballard said. "So you're realistic about it, but you rely on the Savior."

Ballard is asking Southern Baptists across the nation to be a part of launching Northeastern Baptist College by the tried and true methods of praying, giving and going.

Missions teams from North Carolina, Virginia and Alabama

are among those who have traveled to Bennington to help convert the 19,000 square feet of space on the third and fourth floors of a former Ramada Inn and Conference Center into a Baptist college.

Central Baptist Church, Decatur, and East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, fielded a 32-member construction team to help with construction June 2-9.

The team traveled to Vermont prepared to install Sheetrock, but found themselves having to do framing and electrical work as well, said Harry Vice, a member of Central Baptist and the construction team head.

'Big need'

"There's a big need up there," Vice said, referring to the school's building. He was not sure Central could make another trip to help Northeastern but hoped that others would pitch in.

First Baptist Church, Union Springs, is sending a team July 15-20, Ballard said.

The school hopes to launch with 100 students next year, and Ballard tells people there is no better place to send their students than to Northeastern, where they will gain knowledge but also practical ministry experience.

"Less than 2 percent of the state of Vermont claims to have a relationship with Christ, so this is an unreached people group right here in our own country," Ballard said.

(BP, TAB)

Roanoke's Trinity takes VBS off campus

In addition to their own Vacation Bible School (VBS), the members of Trinity Baptist Church, Roanoke, took VBS fun and games outside their church walls to both Randolph County Learning Center and Knollwood Baptist Retirement Center.

Pastor Jeff Burns said they offered VBS June 11-15 complete with snacks, songs and recreation.

Two separate groups from Trinity Baptist visited the two locations every morning from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Teresa Farmer, secretary for Trinity Baptist, said the church's youth played a big part in helping with the events. "We have some great youth here at this church," she said.

At the learning center for individuals with "intellectual disabilities,"

the average VBS attendance was 24 students. Farmer said they had a great time ministering to the center's students as they do every year.

"We got a blessing out of it and they did too," she said.

Tyler Worthey, music minister for Trinity Baptist, attended the VBS for the retirement center and said

church youth ages 10-15 provided music, story time and crafts.

"The VBS at the retirement center went very well," he reported. "It was a really successful time."

The church volunteered to host VBS at both locations about four years ago, and the ministry has continued to improve every year. (TAB)



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— Correction —

The photo cutline in "Soaring Eagle Ministry takes gospel to K'ekchi in Guatemala" in the June 28 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* was incorrect. The correct cutline should have read "Jane Parker and David McGowin meet Pastor Charles Choe (right) in front of a 4-month-old new mission outside Coban, Guatemala."

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

by Jennifer Davis Rash • executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

It's a 'no good, very bad day'

A cat sits trapped under a birdcage with the proper resident of that cage sitting on top of it sneering down at him. This is the entire front cover of the greeting card. Open it up and it reads: "Don't ask..."

I love this card. I bought it solely because it made me laugh.

I'm guessing I connected with this card because I've been the cat in that illustration so many times.

You know those times when you have a day like the one described in Judith Viorst's "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" — a day where it seems every single thing goes totally and magnificently wrong. The kind

of day when you know the only option of gaining any type of redemption is to climb back into bed and start over.

When these days happen to me I become self-absorbed and focused so much on my own woes that I miss all that is going on around me. I plummet pretty quickly into a pity party with a guest list of one — me.

From there, I can't even imagine how I must affect the moods of those with whom I come into contact. If I'm not careful, I might not even really care that I'm dumping a dark cloud over their day.

Isn't it interesting how much our attitudes and moods can affect others?

I can certainly appreciate being the "safe" person for someone comfortable enough to share his or her raw emotions in the heat of a

difficult situation, even if the person is taking out his or her frustrations on me. I remind myself to not take it personally and try to be an encouraging tower of strength for my friend.

But when people with whom I randomly come into contact are grouchy with me or with those around me, it pushes a different button inside me. I'm not sure how to describe it, but it makes me want to confront them, to find out why they think

they have a right to treat others that way.

In all reality, the person may be facing some serious issue and doesn't even realize how ill-mannered he or she is being. A kind word, a smile or even merely walking away could change the entire dynamic for that person. It might even break the cycle

of his or her bad attitude. Otherwise one person's grouchiness could cause another person to respond harshly, which deepens the grouch level of the original grouch, who then takes out the even grouchier feelings on the next person, who now becomes grouchier himself and ... well, you get the picture.

Of course, if the grouch happens to be me, I should remind myself that whatever has me experiencing this "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" is not necessarily the fault of every single person around me. I should try to address the true issue rather than taking out my frustrations on them.

If you find yourself in a similar situation and it's because you're experiencing a serious issue, then think about sharing your struggles with those close to you and allowing them the blessing of supporting you through that situation. But if you're just having a bad day and you're mad about it, then consider spending some time checking your heart and motives. It might surprise you how ugly and discouraging you are being to the world around you.

I know I've been there too many times myself. The reflection is not one I ever want to see again. It's definitely not a reflection of Jesus.



Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

"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."

**Singer/songwriter
Christy Nockels**

Excellent column — "Oh, no, here she comes ... run" — in February. It was rashionally thought-provoking. I look forward to your column each month.

**James Sampley
Ashville, Ala.**

Your column (Rashional Thoughts) in *The Alabama Baptist* is interesting. Thank you for your insights. You asked for experiences with and suggestions on the topic of dealing with a grouch.

I think God must have placed a neon sign on my forehead that reads: "All Grouches Welcome."

My best advice is to not let their gruffness fool you. They are hurting people lashing out in the only way they know. Loving a grouch is like giving a porcupine a hug!

Look beyond their attitude and words, but don't let them run over you. Stand your ground. Just like you have been writing about establishing boundaries, these people must be forced to follow rules. The grouch will eventually show you great respect.

This one particular man was especially grumpy to me. If I said, "Good morning," he would say, "What good is it?" Then I would say, "God is good!"

Another time he asked me if I was getting fat. I just said, "Yes, sir!"

His wife was always giving an excuse for his behavior. One time in particular I had driven them to Birmingham to the doctor. Everything I did — the speed I drove, the lane I was traveling in, etc. — was wrong.

Finally my nerves had taken enough and when we stopped at the doctor's office I said that I was sick and tired of him treating me like trash. The wife immediately started saying, "Oh, he didn't mean things the way they came out."

I told her to stop making excuses. But you know after that point in time, the grouch treated me with respect. I wish I would have stood up for myself earlier. Being assertive is not aggressive. We all have certain rights and we need to stand up for them.

**Kathleen McPherson
Deatsville, Ala.**

I really enjoyed your column "Taming the pinball effect" in the June 7 issue and I share the struggle. I thought I would pass on what one of my pastor mentors shared with me years ago: "When trying to make decisions and choose priorities, remember there are only two things that last forever: God and people." I have to remind myself of that sometimes.

Thanks for always making us think.

**Jim Cooley
Haleyville, Ala.**

Be there

By Erich Bridges

Global correspondent, International Mission Board

Don't just do something; stand there.

Better yet, kneel there. Be there.

It's easy to switch the verbs in the old, accusatory challenge to do something — anything — rather than stand around. Lots of preachers, speakers and writers invert the familiar phrase to encourage us to slow down and be still. But it's hard for us action-oriented Americans to stop and just be. Inaction, even for a moment, seems lazy, unproductive, even weird. We should be multitasking.

Stillness? It's a little scary.

Yet stillness is where we meet God. To be His heart, His hands and His voice, we must lay aside the sound and fury of our ceaseless activities, our personal priorities and our very selves to encounter Him. We need His heart to make a difference in the world, not our divided, selfish hearts. His hands do the healing, not our powerless hands. His voice cuts to the core of searching souls, not our meaningless chatter.

"If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny

himself, take up his cross, and follow Me," Jesus says. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it" (Matt. 16:24-25).

There's plenty of positive action cited in that statement: come, take up, follow, save. Before any of that can happen, however, first there's a negative action, an "inaction," so to speak: deny self.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This column is an excerpt from Erich Bridges' blog post <http://worldviewconversation.blogspot.com/>. Listen to an audio version at <http://media1.imbresources.org/files/154/15420/15420-84831.mp3>

UPCOMING TOPICS

include being a good steward of all of life's resources — time, money, rest, commitments, etc. Send us your experiences with and suggestions on this topic. Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

When we spend time in God's Word, His voice is more clear.

When we spend time worshiping God, His voice is more clear.

When we spend time focusing our thoughts on Him, His voice is more clear.

**Stephen Hall, associate pastor
NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville**

Churches allowed to meet in NYC public schools

A federal judge ruled on June 29 that churches and other faith groups can continue to meet in New York City public school buildings for worship services. The ruling followed a Feb. 12 deadline that banned the use of New York City schools by churches.

The courts lifted the ban in February while a judge reviewed the law. On June 29 Judge Loretta Preska of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York granted the churches a permanent injunction against the New York City Department of Education, determining the city's policy of prohibiting worship violated the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

According to a study by LifeWay Research, two-thirds of Americans believe public schools should rent to churches and other community groups.

After this study was released following the developments earlier in the year in New York City, officials from the State Board of Education in Alabama granted some insight into Alabama's policy on this issue.

According to Larry Craven, gen-

eral counsel for the Alabama State Board of Education, in Alabama, churches are treated the same as other entities when it comes to access to public school property.

"If a school system has in place a policy of allowing any entity the opportunity to rent space from the church for a meeting, then it must allow churches of all denominations to do the same," he said. "Under these circumstances the denial of access to any organization will be viewed as discriminatory."

Research agrees

The study by LifeWay found that 65 percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement "public schools should rent to churches and other community groups," while 16 percent responded that schools "should rent to other community groups but not churches."

Additionally, 12 percent believe "public schools should not rent to any churches or community groups." One percent believe "public schools should rent to churches but not other community groups."

New York state residents are less likely to embrace a law allowing churches to meet in schools, although a plurality (49 percent) there

still believe public schools should rent to churches and other community groups. Twenty-seven percent believe "public schools should rent to other community groups but not to churches." Nineteen percent believe "public schools should not rent to any churches or community groups" while 1 percent said they should rent only to churches. The New York State sample included 123 respondents and the sample was not large enough to break out New York City residents.

This assessment of whether churches renting space in schools are prevalent in Alabama is not assessed at a state level. "In Alabama, the State Department of Education does not have a record of renting of schools by churches," said Malissa Valdes, public information manager for the State Department of Education. She said the local board district offices maintain that data.

The reactions to the January survey were in response to the question: "New York City is no longer allowing churches to rent space in any public schools out of concern that a school would be identified with one particular religious belief or practice. Which of the follow-

ing statements best describes your opinion?"

LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer said the ban had considerable implications for churches in urban contexts and new startup congregations. "Historically schools have been welcoming locations to churches, especially in larger urban centers where schools are in the heart of the communities," he said. "A trend of banning church use of public schools could have significant implications."

According to the study, there are several statistically significant differences between subgroups of Americans.

Americans who live in a large city are less supportive of church and community group use of public schools, with 21 percent saying "public schools should rent to other community groups, but not churches." Americans who "never" attend a worship service are the least likely (32 percent) to agree that churches should be able to meet in public schools and the most likely (39 percent) to select "public schools should rent to other community groups, but not churches."

(BP, TAB)

Want to know God?

Pastor Breck Ladd
Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham

Not long ago my children were playing in a creek behind our home. They had spent the afternoon skipping rocks, making mud pies and getting seriously covered in mud.

When I arrived home, my wife gave me the task of retrieving them for supper. Sounds like a pretty simple task for a man to accomplish. I decided I did not need to change out of my dress clothes, which included a stark white shirt.

I made my way to the creek to find my mud-drenched children. When my kids saw me they squealed, "Daddy!" They ran toward me to greet me and to welcome me home from a day at the office.

At first I was excited and had the desire to move toward them. Then I remembered my white shirt. I did what any good Daddy would do. I ran home yelling, "Catch me if you can."

I am so thankful that God does not respond to us that way. We are covered not with mud, but with sin. Romans 3:23 declares, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." What we deserve is punishment (Rom. 6:23).

However, what He gives us is grace. He is our heavenly Father who runs not from us but to us. He longs to embrace us just as we are. It is this thought that makes the beautiful old hymn "Just As I Am" one of my favorites. This is God's amazing grace. God does not ask us to clean ourselves before we eat at His table as family. He does not ask us because we cannot do it.

The Psalmist declared, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). Paul taught, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

What is so amazing about grace? God forgives and saves us through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ. He looks at us and sees every one of our failures, but He does not run from them. Instead, when we accept His grace by faith, He cleanses us and restores us to a right relationship with our heavenly Father.

MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Glencoe, Ala., a medium-size conservative Southern Baptist church, is seeking resumes for the position of senior pastor. Candidates should be Southern Baptist, exhibit the characteristics of one who is grounded in the Word of God, and be comfortable with a blended style of worship. Please submit resumes to: FBCCG, P.O. Box 5214, Glencoe, AL 35905, or email: jkm11558@bellsouth.net.

PASTOR-WIFE TEAM: Mulberry Baptist Church being a small rural, traditional Southern Baptist church, established 1818, and located 12 miles west of Clanton, Ala., in beautiful Chilton County, is seeking a full-time pastor-wife team, age 35-55, married with children, college graduate with Baptist seminary courses desirable, 5-plus years of experience in preaching, pastoral care and administration with a vision for growth. Salary and benefit package includes spacious church parsonage. Submit resumes and CDs: Chairman Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 7, Maplesville, AL 36750.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Broadway Baptist Church in Rainsville has a full-time minister of music position open. Mail resumes and salary requirements to: ATTN: Personnel Committee, Broadway Baptist Church, P.O. Box 766, Rainsville, AL 35986.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC WORSHIP LEADER: Bell Lane Baptist seeking bivocational music worship leader dedicated to lead adult choir and worship in blended service of traditional hymns and praise and worship music. Send resume to: pastoratbelllane@bellsouth.net or Bell Lane Baptist Church, 1000 Bell Lane Road, Clanton, AL 35045.

MINISTER OF YOUTH & EDUCATION: Farley Community Church (a Southern Baptist church) in Huntsville, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of youth and education. Resumes may be sent to: Farley Community

Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 12302 Bell Road, Huntsville, AL 35803.

FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER/RECREATION MINISTRY DIRECTOR: Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden Ala., is prayerfully seeking our next youth/recreation minister to join our ministry team. Must be Spirit-led and devoted to reaching and growing our youth in their walk with God. Will also direct and lead in our outreach to the community through our Christian Life Center. Please send all correspondence and resumes to: pastorbellevue@gmail.com (www.bbcgadsden.com).

MINISTER OF YOUTH: West Side Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Ala., is searching for a minister of youth (part-time). If interested please mail a resume to: P.O. Box 457, Jacksonville, AL 36265 or email it to: mined@juno.com.

MINISTER OF YOUTH: Valley View Baptist Church in Leeds, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a part-time minister of youth to lead in ministry to youth of the Leeds community, placing special emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, missions, worship and fellowship. Please email resumes to the pastor, Bro. Chad Hayes, at chad.hayes@valleyviewbaptist.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER TO YOUTH: Holt Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is seeking a part-time minister of youth. Please email resumes to: rmitchell@holtbaptistchurch.org, or send via postal mail to: Holt Baptist Church, 3101 Alabama Avenue NE, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Randolph Baptist Association seeks a director of missions. Send resumes to: Rev. Richie Farrow, 685 Royster Road, Ashland, AL 36251, or email: farrow@tallapoosak12.org.

CHURCH PIANIST: Clearview Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is seeking a church pianist. If you are interested in the position, please contact our minister of worship, Dale Jones, at 205-854-2027 or dale@clearviewbaptist.com.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT:

The Birmingham Baptist Association is now receiving applications for a full-time financial administrative assistant. The applicant must be proficient in ACS and Excel software and must have experience in bookkeeping with at least two years of experience. Office hours are Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Applications may be mailed to: Birmingham Baptist Association, 750 Montclair Road, Birmingham, AL 35213, or emailed to: margied@bbaonline.org.

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Legacy

ALABAMA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

JULY 2012

Priorities

By Bob Dewhurst, ABCH VP, Ministry Development

Have you ever looked around your house and noticed that there always seems to be repairs that need to be made? Some are the result of "wear and tear." Others may be from neglect. Yes, it takes work to maintain a house. Removing stains, adding another coat of paint, or fixing a leaking sink are time consuming and troublesome. But it takes an even greater sense of commitment to maintain a home and a family. We at Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH) realize that God's intent was for children to be parented by their birth families. But we also know, sadly enough, that some parents cannot or will not commit themselves to providing for their children.

And when children in these families face unthinkable hurts, ABCH desires to live out our vision to *offer hope and wholeness through knowing God.*

The leaks, cracks, and all the other flaws in the buildings where we live are temporal. Our houses have no eternal value. We can't take our belongings with us when we leave this world. At least, I've never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul. Yet why is it that I can often spend more time caring for the temporary than focusing on the eternal? You may be guilty as well.

The Bible tells us in Matthew 6:20 "...lay up for yourself treasures in heaven..."

The fact is, you and I both need to invest more time, talents and treasures in maintaining the occupants of a home instead of the stuff in the house. We at the Children's Homes are striving to do just that. We are in a maintenance and repair business that has eternal consequences.

We care for real children who have many cracks, scars, chips, nicks and breaks from circumstances beyond their control. I encourage you to join our "business." You may be a "master craftsman" with God-given abilities to help restore broken lives. You may be a "supplier" of the equipment needed to help improve the quality of the restoration. Or you may just want to be a "silent partner" who provides the financial resources to keep this business – God's business of protecting, nurturing and restoring children and families through Christ-centered services – going.

So the next time you look around your house and think of all the repairs that are needed, remember the children – particularly the children that pass our way that need to be restored.

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(Memorialized person's name is bolded.)

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Lynn Champion Collins, Hope Hull: Pine Hill BC
Joseph Lynwood "Bo" Daniel, Brewton: Ronda L. Daniel
Bertie R. Donald, Atmore: Carlton & Virginia Sharpless
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O'Neal Griffin, Georgiana: Brushey Creek BC of Chapman

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East Cullman Assoc. choirs' CD sales help rebuild local church

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Last year the East Cullman Baptist Association joined its choirs together for a concert, putting on a well-received event. This year the choirs have collaborated once again, but they have gone a step further by recording a CD.

"Last summer's event kind of sparked the idea to record something," said David Moore, music minister at First Baptist Church, Hanceville. "It was neat to see the whole community come together to work on it."

The representatives determined a theme — hymns, using updated arrangements — and began planning for the recording process. They also had to plan how to distribute the funds raised from the sale of the CD.

"We decided to record the CD, but we didn't think of it as a moneymaker right away," said April Pearson, music minister at First Baptist Church, Fairview. "As people showed interest, though, we wondered what we wanted to do with any profit we'd make."

As the organizers began discussing how to allocate funds raised from the sale of the discs, the idea of donating to statewide tornado relief came up as an option.

However, when Chuck Johnston, director of music ministries at

Northbrook Baptist Church, Cullman, ran into the pastor of nearby East Side Baptist Church, Cullman, he realized they had found their answer.

"Their church was completely destroyed by the tornadoes last year, and so later on I got to thinking, 'Why don't we do this for a church right here in our community?'" Johnston said. "Everyone thought that was a good idea."

And so with a beneficiary determined, choirs from 10 churches across East Cullman Association gathered at Northbrook Baptist in early March to record the CD. To facilitate the recording the association hired a Nashville-based engineer to

run the show.

"Most of us had never been through anything like that, but he (the engineer) did a wonderful job and put us all at ease," said Pearson.

Concerts also set

Currently the CDs are available through Northbrook (www.northbrookbc.com) and the East Cullman Association (256-737-9918), and roughly 500 of the initial 1,000 CDs ordered have already been sold.

"I was in town just the other day and ran into a lady from East Side Baptist who had heard the CD," Pearson said. "She said she'd really

enjoyed the music, and it was great to hear that positive feedback."

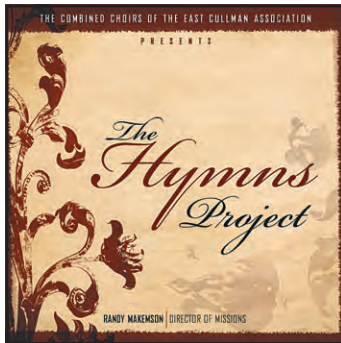
To complement and help market the CD, the 10 choirs will reconvene three times this summer to put on concerts in three different locations across the association. The concerts will feature the hymns from the CD, which are all

"very singable" and "set to a good tempo," according to Pearson. CDs will be sold at each event.

"The goal is to get as many people to the concerts as possible so we can share the idea behind this recording — to raise money to rebuild East Side Baptist's facility," Moore said.

"We're hoping for a big turnout."

According to Pearson, the choir members are excited to reunite for the concerts. "I think everyone who's been a part of it has had a great time," she said. "We're looking forward to getting together again for the three concerts, since the recording happened back in March."



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TWO DATES TO CHOOSE FROM **OCTOBER 1st thru 3rd** **AND** **OCTOBER 3rd thru 5th**

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

Wow! What a busy month since the last time I wrote. In two days time I drove over 700 miles in order to take a reverse mortgage application in Atmore and then in Dothan. I went to Atmore because a homeowner found himself in a difficult situation and was struggling to pay off a huge debt on his property. With the reverse, we will be able to pay off his debt and give him some cash that he'll never have to repay as long as he lives in his home.

The folks over in Dothan faced a similar situation since one person draws disability and the other wanted to retire. Making the house payment was a real burden for them.

I've also been working with four couples who are having some physical difficulties. One couple needed some cash to remodel their bathroom be-

cause the wife needed an easier way to get in and out of the bathtub. The other couples needed help with medical expenses.

Not all my customers are in the same boat however. Last week we closed on a loan and the homeowner said they would now be able to do some traveling.

If you're also wanting some financial freedom or facing some financial needs, give me a call and let's explore your possibilities with a reverse mortgage.

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director and an active deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. Call 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgowinking.com for a free brochure or quote.



Jimmy Dixon



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Family Matters

Camp of Champions

"We had more than 500 attend our annual camp at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. Thank you to all who gave to make it happen!"

Q: What do you do at camp?

A: Eat snacks! Play Bazoooka Ball and climb the Ropes Course. Gather around the bonfire. Learn about God.

Q: What do you like best about camp?

A: I like mainly everything about camp the best!
I like that we learn about God.
Swimming!
S'mores!
I like making new friends.

After seeing a Shocco brochure that said, "Enjoy Shocco all year," Seth told his dad, "We should do that!"

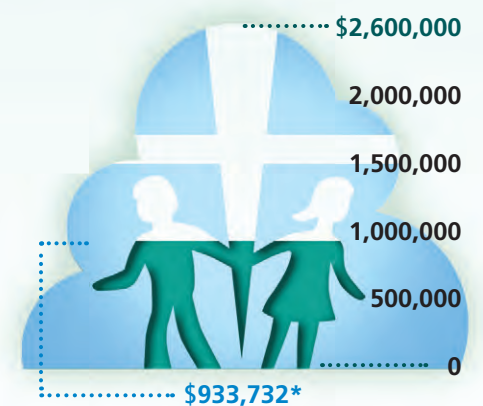
"My oldest son said he likes coming to camp, because all the families are like ours, so no one stares at us or asks questions."

Photography by Erin Tunnell and Jessica Sansom

ABCH thankful for estate gift

The Children's Homes wishes to acknowledge a very generous gift from the Estate of Benton and Imogene Herring. The Herring's stewardship planning will make a difference in the lives of the children entrusted to our care on our Dothan campus and beyond for years to come. We are very grateful they have allowed us to administer this significant expression of love and care to dependent and neglected children.

2012 ANNUAL OFFERING



The 2012 goal for the Annual Children's Homes Offering is \$2.6 million. Please encourage your church to give.

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 15

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson

Dean and Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Judges 4:1-4, 6-8a, 10; 5:1-5, 9-11a

Last week the lesson introduced the book of Judges. Readers this week are introduced to leaders who follow God, leaders who follow God conditionally, followers who follow fervently and those who follow no one. The study this week addresses two types of leaders and the necessity of following godly leadership.

Listen to the Lord (4:1-4, 6-7)

After the death of Ehud the judge, Israel sought after the gods of the Canaanites once again. As a result God gave the tribes over to the oppressive rule of the Canaanite commander Sisera. Israel's spiritual adultery resulted in 20 years of cruel bondage.

God then raised up a prophetess, Deborah, and the army commander Barak. Deborah heard directly from God, and she conveyed the message to Barak. He was to deploy an army of 10,000 men to confront Sisera and his army. Barak needed to listen to the Lord's command.

This passage is an apt illustration of Proverbs 29:18. Though the verse is often misused as a mandate to follow blindly whatever "vision" a leader dreams up, the proverb actually conveys the idea that without a clear communication of God's message, people will do what is right in their own eyes (see Judg. 17:6; 21:25). God revealed His message, and without obedience Israel would remain under bondage to their enemies.

Godly leaders hear from God. God speaks today through His Word, the Bible. The Holy Spirit also bears witness, illuminating the application of His Word. When God ordains leaders who honor and fear Him, He gives them direction for the people they lead. Without a God-centered message, church members will pursue their own agendas.

Get Personally Involved (4:8-10)

Barak heeded the words from God, but he set his own conditions.

Rather than responding to God's message by saying, "Anything, anytime, anywhere You want," Barak said that he would only

lead the troops if Deborah went with him. His conditional answer led to another individual delivering Israel from Sisera's hand. Later in the chapter, readers will discover that an unassuming woman named Jael executed Sisera.

God raises up leaders in the church to direct, manage and lead in the activities of the congregation. When the pastor delivers his message, it is the responsibility of every believer to respond to the invitation, to get involved with God's plan. Instead of simply listening to the Bible study teacher or discipleship leader, believers must take heed without conditions. James instructs Christians to "be doers of the word."

Too often, responses to a sermon or a lesson treat the invitation as a multiple choice quiz: it counts for little, it may be a trick question and there will be other quizzes. Henry Blackaby rightly exhorted, "Find out what God is doing and join Him in it." Avery Willis called it being "on mission with God."

Praise the Lord (5:1-5, 9-11a)

Glory for godly leadership belongs to the Lord. The lands of Edom and Mount Seir shook under the footsteps of Israel's army, but Yahweh's reign continues over the nation since before Mount Sinai. The commanders are honored for their sacrifice, but blessings are directed to God.

While Deborah and Barak are mentioned as leaders of the people, the praise for deliverance is directed to the God of Israel. In this song Jael receives the highest of human honor, but God receives the ultimate praise for His directive hand in the events recorded in the song.

Christians must acknowledge and honor godly leadership, but worship is reserved for God alone. Jesus instructed His disciples to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

Paul instructed the church in Rome to submit to those in authority (Rom. 13). In this acknowledgement and submission, let the church remember that praise for every victory belongs to the Lord.

Bible Studies for Life

By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

EMPOWERED

Romans 8:26-27;

Ephesians 5:17-21; 6:18

The New Testament makes it crystal clear that as soon as a person becomes a Christian, putting their trust in Jesus as their Savior, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Yet in the book of Acts, the same people who received the gift of the Spirit in Jerusalem are said to be "filled with the Spirit and speak the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

Be Filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:17-18)

This is why, when Paul writes to a church in Ephesians who had been "sealed by the Spirit" (Eph. 1:13), he encourages them to "be filled with the Spirit."

Paul speaks about being filled with the Spirit in the context of warning his readers against being "drunk with wine."

The contrast is helpful in trying to understand what Paul means by being "filled with the Spirit." Instead of allowing any outside influence such as alcohol to control our lives, being filled with the Spirit is allowing God to be in control of all our attitudes and actions.

Be Filled to Serve (Eph. 5:19-21)

Being filled with the Spirit has nothing to do with ecstasy or being out of control. Indeed Paul warns against any form of foolishness or debauchery.

Being filled with the Spirit will lead God's people to express their worship and thanksgiving in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" and by living in mutual submission to one another in the fellowship of God's people.

In vv. 5:22-6:9, Paul makes it clear that being filled with the Holy Spirit will affect the way in which we live in relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children and even within the sphere of the workplace.

God is seeking to control all of our lives, and in this way to empower us to live a life

of holiness which will have a powerful impact on those who are unbelievers.

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is seen to be one of the Persons of the Godhead who go "out of themselves for the sake of creation."

He hovers over the waters in Genesis (Gen 1:2), bringing forms out of chaos and bringing life to each stage of God's work as Creator.

He is still the Creator Spirit; but He is also the Spirit of redemption, working in the world, seeking to bring men and women into a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Likewise those who are filled with the Holy Spirit will also be people who "go out of ourselves for the sake of others."

Spirit-filled believers do not put themselves first but are always thinking of the needs of others.

Be Filled to Pray (Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26-27)

One final aspect of the work of the Spirit is that of prayer.

In Ephesians 6:18, following a section in which Paul has spoken about the need to put on the "armor of God" to meet the attacks of the evil one, he encourages us to "pray in the Spirit at all times and in every prayer with supplication."

Paul sees prayer as being an integral aspect of every facet of our spiritual life.

In Romans 8 two members of the Trinity engage in prayer on our behalf in a remarkable way.

In Romans 8:34 we are told that the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God and interceding for us.

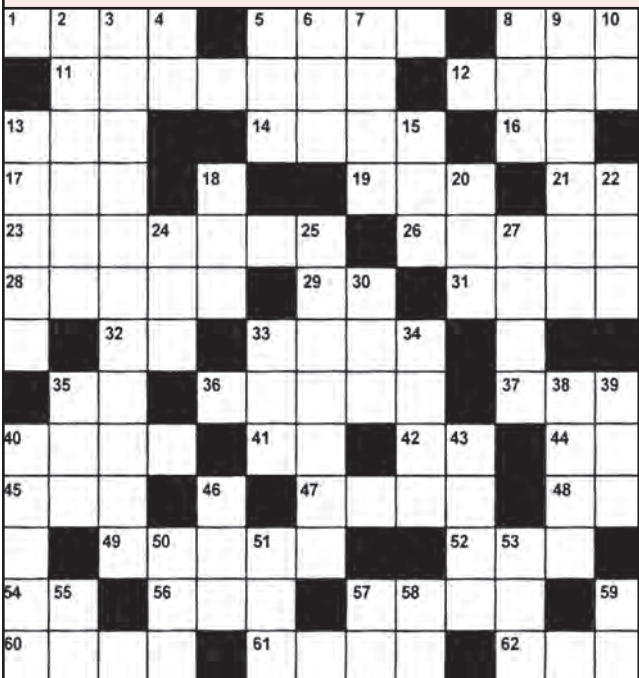
Earlier in verse 26 Paul tells us that the "Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray ... but the very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

When we feel we do not have the energy or the words to pray, God steps in and the Spirit and Lord Jesus pray for us.

However wonderful it is when a friend tells us he or she will pray for us, the Son and the Spirit join their own voices to come before the throne of God on our behalf, bringing their requests to the Father.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Garden of ____.
- Wander.
- He is of ____; ask him. (John 9:21)
- And the ____ and the morning were the first day. (Gen 1:5)
- The first man.
- The first woman.
- Pare.
- Doctor. (abbr.)
- Director. (abbr.)
- Grass.
- This ____ in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:19)
- Lands surrounded by water.
- Make broader.
- Day and night shall not _____. (Gen 8:22)
- Chicago transportation.
- What hast thou ____? (Gen. 4:10)
- Spelling. (abbr.)
- Ye shall not eat of every ____ of the garden? (Gen. 3:1)
- Old Testament. (abbr.)
- Naomi's daughter-in-law. (Ruth 1:4)

Down

- Relatives.
- Son of Adam and Eve.
- ____ shall not eat of it. (Gen. 3:3)
- Let ____ make man. (Gen. 1:26)
- Hear the word of God and ____ it. (Luke 8:21)
- Vase.
- Naked.
- Either / ____.
- I will make of thee a ____ nation. (Gen. 12:2)
- To be in poor health.
- And it was _____. (Gen. 1:7)
- Deed.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (abbr.)
- ____ thou not the oppressor. (Prov. 3:31)
- As of fire, and it sat upon ____ of them. (Acts 2:3)
- Thou shalt ____ eat of it. (Gen 2:17)
- And they shall be ____ flesh. (Gen. 2:24)
- That in the ____ to come. (Eph. 2:7)
- Total.
- And the Lord God planted a _____. (Gen 2:8)
- Printer's measure.
- Decree.
- Both ____ and high. (Ps. 49:2)
- Love ____ another. (John 15:17)
- And I ____ eat. (Gen. 3:12)
- There is none good but _____. (Matt. 19:17)
- Child shall play on the hole of the _____. (Isa. 11:8)
- The ____ beguiled me. (Gen. 3:13)
- Pier.
- Meadow.
- ____ me, and know my thoughts. (Ps. 139:23)
- Lefthanded judge. (Judg. 3:15)
- Paddle.
- An ____ is nothing. (1 Cor. 8:4)

- They have no rest day ____ night. (Rev. 14:11)
- ____d is the ground for thy sake. (Gen. 3:17)
- The ____ of the scornful. (Ps. 1:1)
- Recreation. (abbr.)
- Beam.
- I took the little book ... and ____ it up. (Rev. 10:10)
- Electrically charged atom.
- Upon.
- North Carolina. (abbr.)
- Exclamation.
- ____ was very good. (Gen. 1:31)



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Russian Baptists seek to work with Orthodox churches

MOSCOW — “Baptists do not preach the Baptist confession; Baptists preach the gospel. Nowhere do we give out calls to accept the Baptist faith.”

That was one of many claims made by Alexey Smirnov, president of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, in an interview published on his church’s website May 21. The interview referred primarily to the Moscow meeting of Smirnov and John Upton, president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), with Kirill I, patriarch of Moscow and all the Rus’ and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, on March 29.

This was the first meeting between the heads of the Russian Baptist and Orthodox churches since the deceased Alexey II met with then-President Yuri Sipko and Neville Callam, BWA general secretary, in Moscow on June 18, 2008.

Smirnov could envision Baptists and Orthodox again evangelizing jointly — as occurred on occasion two decades ago — but he prefers a focus on the preaching of the gospel, not history or church tradition.

“The Orthodox church is changing,” he said. “The patriarch is preaching the gospel. We could help and accompany each other along the way.” Smirnov noted that a new joint committee has been formed to resolve conflicts between Orthodox and Baptist circles.

1-day missions blitz sends out 570 volunteers

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — What difference does one day make? For some it is the difference between spending their eternity in hell or in heaven. The hundreds who heard about Christ through Missions Spectacular activities and events had the seeds planted for coming to Him.

Illinois Baptist State Association’s (IBSA) one-day missions blitz, Missions Spectacular, sent 570 volunteers from 60 churches to six locations — East St. Louis, Champaign, Fairfield, Litchfield, Metropolis, Springfield and their surrounding communities — to share Christ’s love in the neighborhoods through block parties, cleanup projects, food pantry assistance and more.

IBSA’s Mark Emerson coordinated the event. “Missions Spectacular continues to be an effective event that connects Illinois Baptists with projects in different parts of the state,” he shared. “When Illinois Baptists see firsthand what God is doing through the efforts of a church planter or through a local community ministry, they can sense an invitation by the Holy Spirit to partner with these workers or begin looking for other ways they can make a difference throughout Illinois.”

Year-to-date CP giving 4.27 percent above goal

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are \$5,959,045.57, or 4.27 percent, above the year-to-date budgeted goal and are .32 percent above contributions received during the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Frank S. Page.

The total includes receipts from state conventions, fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2011–2012 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget.

As of June 30, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$145,459,045.57, or 104.27 percent of the \$139,500,000 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America.

The total is \$464,635.86 more than the \$144,994,409.71 received through the end of June 2011.

June’s CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$16,549,505.61.

Korean Baptists discuss church planting, growth

LINTHICUM, Md. — About 800 people from 600 Korean Baptist churches in 40 states including Alaska and Hawaii gathered for the Council of Korean Baptist Churches’ annual meeting.

The theme for the June 18–20 meeting in Linthicum was “Churches Planting Churches.” The keynote speaker was Sun Ro Kim from Han Ma Eum Baptist Church in Kangwon Province, South Korea.

Sung Ho Kim, pastor of Living Stone Korean Baptist Church, Dallas, was elected as president of the council, which approved resolutions emphasizing the need for church planting and voicing opposition to same-sex “marriage.”

Other topics highlighted at the meeting were church growth, embracing the nations and encouraging second-generation Koreans. ☐

‘Lovin’ the Sixties’

FBC Guntersville member shares play to be ‘salt, light’

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

High school memories plus popular songs from the 1960s equal a great time for families in Guntersville thanks to a stage play written by one Alabama Baptist church leader.

Two years ago, Tim Hays, a deacon and Sunday School teacher at First Baptist Church, Guntersville, and his friend, David Chupp, a pediatrician and former minister of music, wrote a play called “Lovin’ the Sixties.”

Hays categorizes the play as “a jukebox musical” featuring some of Marshall County’s history including the Dairy Hut, a restaurant that was popular during the ‘60s.

“The storyline is my wife and I go to our 40-year class reunion,” Hays said. “While we are there, we disagree about how we met, how cool we were and how our friends met. When we walk in, we go back to our 1969 junior-senior prom and see exactly what happens.”

That same year the play was written, it was performed at The Whole Backstage, a community theater in Guntersville, in front of sellout crowds.

‘It was a phenomenon’

“We sold out all eight shows in the 333-seat theater,” Hays said. “We had to bring in chairs to sit 350. It was a phenomenon. I had to turn my mother away on Mother’s Day. I finally got her a seat.”

This month, Alabama residents will have another chance to see the play.

“It’s a G-rated show that is not offensive in any way,” Hays said.

“It’s just something we can do and have fun. It’s a nice place to bring your kids. People are hungry for that kind of entertainment — clean, wholesome and kind of a Mayberry theme to it.”

Ken Patterson, minister of music at First, Guntersville, stars as a character named Ernie in the stage play, which he says is filled with “all the fun songs from the ‘60s.”

“My job is to take care of myself and make sure I do my part and help the men with their vocals,” he said. “It gives me an opportunity to use my music skills as a way to help the community not just through the church.”

But the show is not all fun and games. Hays hopes it will also bring awareness to the need for organ donation.

“My son passed away waiting on a heart transplant,” Hays said. “He was almost 15. ... There were just no donors. One thing that was encouraging to me was that there was someone who signed their card as a result of my son and seven or eight people were helped because of it. ... If your death can help five people or help no one, which one would you choose? God is going to use the tragedy and make something good out of it.”

Now a fellow cast member re-

minds Hays of others who are awaiting organ transplants.

“There is a lady in the show who is on complete dialysis and doesn’t have any kidneys,” Hays said. “She comes and does our show and goes on dialysis for 12 hours plus she works. She told me that this show

is a great motivation for her and it’s such a positive influence in her life. ... We are all very prayerful that she will get that opportunity.”

Like Hays, Patterson sees the play as an opportunity to save lives — not physically, but spiritually by sharing the gospel.

“I think one of the important things for ministers to do is to be salt and light in the community,”

he said. “Sometimes, you can get in your own world and get stuck there doing administrative things. It’s good when you can get involved in the community. I’ve come across many people that I would not have met had I not left the church building.”

“Lovin’ the Sixties” will open July 13 at The Whole Backstage in Guntersville.

Performances will be held July 13, 14, 19, 20 and 21 at 7 p.m., and July 15 and 22 at 2 p.m. For more information, call 256-582-SHOW. ☐

“People are hungry for that kind of entertainment — clean, wholesome and kind of a Mayberry theme to it.”

**Tim Hays
‘Lovin’ the Sixties’
co-writer**

Drug violence in Mexico deters volunteers

A steady decrease in missions trips to Mexico due to drug violence has left many Mexicans feeling abandoned just when their anxiety levels are peaking, missions experts in Texas said.

“It’s unprecedented,” said E. Daniel Rangel, director of River Ministry and Mexico missions for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Yet Rangel and others agree it is often much too dangerous to send teams, especially youth groups, to Mexico.

The U.S. State Department warned Americans from going there, saying U.S. citizens have been victims of “homicide, gun battles, kidnapping, carjacking and highway robbery” in violence between the government and drug cartels.

Mexico-focused missions projects have plummeted from 400 annually three years ago to 80 in 2011, Rangel said. Those still coming are all-adult teams that have been working in a particular region for years and have solid contacts there.

“What generally happens is people make plans to come, but when [they] see these articles in the paper, they cancel,” he said.

The situation has led many in Mexico to feel forgotten by American congregations who had once adopted them, Rangel said.

Those in Mexico understand why missions groups cannot come, but complain that the absence has come with silence from their American counterparts.

‘The need is great’

It is important that Americans send emails to let Mexicans know they are being prayed for, Rangel said. They should also send supplies that would have been taken on the visits.

“We have to do something because the need is great,” he said.

Some churches, however, are pressing into violent areas.

Shiloh Terrace Baptist Church, Dallas, has adopted Indian Hills colonia near Mercedes, Texas. A colonia is a neighborhood marked by

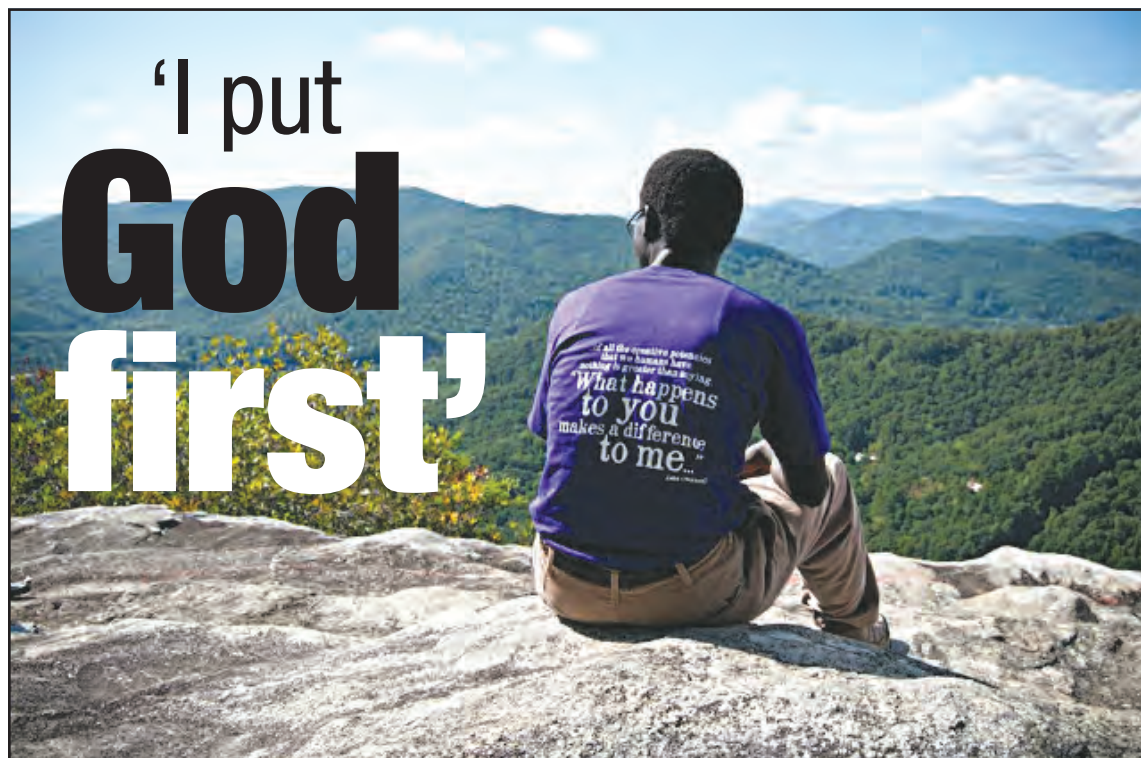
extreme poverty and a lack of basic public services populated mostly by squatters.

“We’ve been going down twice a year,” said David Balyeat, minister of missions for Shiloh Terrace Baptist. Teams from Shiloh Terrace have done building projects, renovations and activities like Vacation Bible Camp. About 60 volunteers from the church work in Indian Hills each year, and they have never faced any violence in the three years since their partnership began.

“Personally, [the possibility of violence] increases my resolve to go,” Balyeat said. “That’s where we have to shine our light.”

Volunteers who travel to the area know what might happen to them but go anyway. “There are certain people God calls to those places and certain people He doesn’t,” he said.

The church does not currently take missions trips over the border to Mexico, but they would if they felt called by God, Balyeat said. “Where there isn’t Kingdom is where we need to go.” (ABP)



ABP photo

Lost Boy's journey leads to divinity school in Georgia after surviving Sudan's civil war

International students who have endured war and disease in their homelands are nothing new at Mercer University. But Abraham Deng can claim that and more: as a child, he survived lion, hyena and crocodile attacks along with starvation and disease — all while evading hostile troops hunting him through 1,000 miles of African plains and jungles.

Deng, 31, is one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, a group made famous by a childhood exodus from war-torn Sudan that landed them in refugee camps before being scattered across the globe. There were about 30,000 in all and almost 4,000 landed in the United States.

And one of them — Deng — ended up at Mercer's McAfee School of Theology, where he is currently working on a master of divinity degree.

Deng is also a religious minority at McAfee because he is not Baptist. He is an Anglican who attends an Episcopal church where he often preaches Sunday mornings.

But denominational differences mean nothing to him.

Heaven and denominations were not even part of Deng's belief system as a child. He was born to a family of sheep and cow herders in an area of southern Sudan where traditional African spirituality held sway.

"I remember very well my parents had a small god and a shrine in the home," Deng said.

"When I took care of the cattle and sheep, I would look into the sky and clouds and I would think the spirits of my ancestors were all around protecting us."

There seemed to be very little protecting Deng and his friends and family the day in 1987 when government troops and militias attacked his village, Duk, and others in the region.

The strife was part of an ongoing civil war between Christian and Muslim forces that had begun four years earlier.

Deng was 6 at the time and tending the herds when terrified children began running past him. Within moments he found himself running too.

"I was just following the group, thinking that the war would come to an end and I would return home," he said. "It did not happen the way I anticipated."

The disbelief and confusion Deng experienced was common among his peers, said Joan Hecht, author of the 2005 book "The Journey of the Lost Boys" and

founder of the nonprofit Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan in Jacksonville, Fla.

They were forced to flee on foot across great distances while avoiding wild animals, government-backed militias and rebels.

"They have lived such uncertain lives," she said. "Almost every Lost Boy and Girl carries scars on their bodies from their journeys."

Deng said his scars are largely emotional and stemmed from seeing a cousin and many friends die from starvation, disease and wild animal attacks.

Lions and hyenas usually pounced at night, when the children learned to walk to avoid daytime air attacks by government planes, he said. "In some instances I saw the limbs of kids eaten by the lions — the heads and the hands and the feet."

At a refugee camp, Deng met a 16-year-old Anglican evangelist and fellow Lost Boy named Barnabas. His teachings about Christ and Scripture began to help Deng process the ordeal.

"The Bible became part of my life and I put God first," he said.

After a likely graduation in December, Deng plans to study to become a physician's assistant. He plans to take his spiritual and medical training back to Sudan to serve communities that have neither trained clergy nor doctors.

Deng said he never tires of telling his story because he knows it is inspiring to others. Also he said he is called to be a witness to the atrocities and tragedies he witnessed as a child.

But Deng said he still struggles with the ordeal he endured in Africa and is most troubled about why he survived and thousands did not.

Even after becoming a Christian and adopting the name Abraham, Deng said he became angry with God about the squalid refugee camps and the violent deaths he witnessed getting there.

"I was 7 and I said if God is there, why was there so much suffering, why am I separated from my family — why did God do that?"

He has since accepted that he cannot know why those things happened, a fact aided by learning that his mother and other relatives are still alive in Sudan.

He has also come to believe that questioning God can be spiritually healthy.

"Asking questions of God is not bad because that's how we find out what God wants from us, and this is how we become closer to God." (ABP)



DENG

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Court rules in favor of crisis pregnancy centers

RICHMOND, Va. — In the latest legal victory for pro-life crisis pregnancy centers nationwide, an appeals court has struck down a Baltimore law that would have required such facilities to post, in large print outside their doors, a sign saying they don't provide abortions or refer clients to abortion providers.

Crisis pregnancy centers said the signs would have chased women away before they got the help they needed, and they also argued the signs were an unconstitutional violation of free speech.

In a 2-1 ruling June 27 the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the centers, upholding an earlier decision by a lower court judge.

In a separate 2-1 decision the same day, the appeals court also struck down a Montgomery County, Md., law requiring that pregnancy centers post a sign with two disclosures: first, stating that a "licensed medical professional" is not on staff, and second, that the "Montgomery County Health Officer encourages women who are or may be pregnant to consult with a licensed health care provider."

The Montgomery County law, the court said, "amounts to an impermissible government control of speech."

"The government-mandated statement, which must be posted 'conspicuously' on a pregnancy center's wall, suggests to potential clients that the center is not to be trusted and that a pregnancy center's services, like religious counseling or job placement assistance, will usually be inferior to those offered by medical professionals," the majority ruled. "To be sure, Montgomery County is entitled to believe that pregnancy is first and foremost a medical condition, but it may not compel unwilling speakers to express that view."

Charitable donations to religious bodies decline

CHICAGO — Post-recession America is beginning to open its wallet to charities again but is not giving as generously to religious institutions.

While charitable donations from individuals rose nearly 4 percent overall in 2011, according to the annual Giving USA report, donations to houses of worship and other religious bodies dropped by 1.7 percent — a decrease for the second year in a row.

The report, compiled by the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy and released June 19, shows that individual Americans gave nearly \$218 billion last year, \$96 billion of which went to religious organizations.

The proportion of the charitable donations going to religious groups has been falling steadily for decades, said Robert Evans of Giving USA's editorial review board.

Evans offered several reasons for the decline, including increased competition from a proliferating number of nonreligious organizations, a decrease in church attendance and a general lack of sophistication within religious institutions regarding fundraising.

"Clergy in America have not been sufficiently trained as CEOs of institutions to be comfortable and conversant with contemporary fundraising technology and techniques," he said.

The report shows that charitable giving is a priority for Americans, said Eileen Heisman, CEO of National Philanthropic Trust. "People were giving even during the lowest points of the recession, but as we make an economic rebound, donors feel more comfortable gifting their dollars — especially when they support a cause or organization that's important to them."

1 in 5 Americans will not vote for Mormon president

WASHINGTON — Nearly one in five Americans say they would not vote for a Mormon president, a percentage that has hardly budged since 1967, according to a new Gallup poll.

It is unclear how the anti-Mormon bias will affect Mitt Romney, the presumed GOP presidential nominee, Gallup said, since just 57 percent of Americans know that he is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"This suggests the possibility that as Romney's faith becomes better known this summer and fall, it could become more of a negative factor," Gallup writes, "given that those who resist the idea of a Mormon president will in theory become more likely to realize that Romney is a Mormon as the campaign unfolds."

Still, Gallup noted that John F. Kennedy won the presidency in 1960 despite the 21 percent of Americans who said they would not vote for a Catholic president.