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Chaplain John Boyers has spent 20 years giving pastoral care to the players and staff of the Manchester United football (soccer) team.

'Incarnational ministry'

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

Manchester United chaplain to manage faith presence in Olympic Village

John Boyers' gig at the Summer Olympics might seem sensational until you see his normal digs. His "office" — the home of the Manchester United football (soccer) club — is nicknamed the Theatre of Dreams. For 20 years, he's rubbed shoulders with the thousands who pay \$25 a head to tour Old Trafford, one of the world's most visited stadiums. And that's not counting game days, when 76,000 fans show up.

Boyers is a constant in a place of constant turnover, and he will tell you that's just the way he likes it.

"Being sensitively present in

people's lives and being found trustworthy over time are so important," said Boyers, chaplain for the 647 full-time staff members and players of Manchester United. "I come alongside people to be a supportive friend, providing spiritual and pastoral care when they need it."

'A secular culture'

He doesn't proselytize. He has his reasons.

"It's different from being a chaplain in the United States," Boyers said. "In English sports, a secular culture, people are suspicious of keen Christians."

Opportunities for overt evangelism are very restricted, and a "hard sell" just doesn't work well in England, he said.

"So chaplains are accepted by clubs as those who serve, offering pastoral and spiritual care sensitively to all people employed by a club," Boyers said. "That's the deal. If you don't like the deal, don't sign up."

That means there are no organized

prayer times before games or chapel services for players, but near Easter and Christmas he does lead Bible studies for Christian staff. As for his regular weekly work, Boyers said, "I pray that the Lord will go before me, be with me and direct me, causing people to ask the questions which produce significant conversations."

And, he said, many days they do. A number of players and staff dealing with problems, crises and life questions seek him out to talk. Those who don't still think of him as a "good guy," shake his hand in the hallway and know he's there if they ever did decide to chat.

"At the heart of United Kingdom (UK) sports chaplaincy is one concept: trusting relationships. When people get to know you and trust you, they open up to you, often when they need help," Boyers said.

Boyers is invading their space on purpose — and the staff and players value that, he said.

"Chaplaincy is incarnational ministry — what Jesus did to identify with

us," he said. "The Church can't hide behind its lovely windows and doors. It's got to get out there into the wider world."

"It's messy work," he said, "but if the incarnation of Jesus means anything to us, we have to identify with people as He did and meet them where they are."

It was that truth that got Boyers out of the church and into chaplaincy in the first place. It's the reason he agreed to pilot the nation's chaplaincy program on behalf of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The program now has 230 chaplains of different Christian denominations placed in professional sports from soccer to horse racing.

"I have known John Boyers for 25 years and honor him as the doyen of sports chaplains in the UK. He has a winsome way of opening doors that were previously closed," said David Coffey, global ambassador for Baptist Missionary Society World Mission and past president of Baptist World (See 'Boyers,' page 13)

COMMENT

There Is Another Way

Those who signed the “Traditional Baptist Understanding of Salvation” statement took it on the chin during the recent annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Though not mentioned from the platform, many hallway conversations blamed the statement for creating a situation where Calvinism became a front-burner issue. It was not uncommon to hear people say they wished the statement had not been released.

Part of that reaction is fear of another theological fight. Southern Baptists are still living with the impact of the Conservative Resurgence from the 1970s and 1980s. More recently we have aimed our public guns at cultural and political issues, and many Baptists are growing weary of the continuing confrontations. Thoughts of another round of serious theological conflict are simply less than appealing.

Calvinism growing

Studies indicate Calvinism continues to grow among Southern Baptists, especially among younger pastors. Anecdotal stories confirm the studies. A growing number of churches face the issue when calling a new pastor or youth pastor. While pockets of Calvinism can be found in most Southern Baptist-related seminaries, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is most identified with Reformed theology, primarily because of the influence of its president Al Mohler.

Speaking to the editors of state Baptist papers in February, Mohler said, “When I first arrived at Southern, trust me, if there was a Calvinist on campus I was the one.” Nearly 20 years later, the seminary is widely known for its championing of Calvinistic theology.

Mohler told the editors he was a five-point Calvinist, a position he has never hidden. Then he added, “Calvinism is the shape of the future because the options otherwise don’t very much exist.” He explained that only Calvinism offers the rational support the younger generation needs for the “far deeper and more substantial doctrinal conversations and theological conversations” taking place as cultural Christianity disappears.

The Southern Seminary president makes much of the history of Baptist confessions of faith and contends that the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, which he helped craft, is consistent with the Calvinistic heritage of Baptists.

It was Mohler’s prediction that Calvinism is the only alternative for the future that prompted many signers of the “traditional Baptist” statement to release their public statement May 31. These long-time leaders, including two other SBC seminary presidents, wanted to say there is another way — the traditional Baptist way.

Interestingly, both sides define the other into their camp. Mohler, for example, says, “There are people in the SBC who in the SBC are called anti-Calvin-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ists or non-Calvinists who, in the larger contexts, would show up and be recognized as Calvinists.”

In their book “Whosoever Will,” David Allen of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Steve Lemke of New Orleans Seminary describe author Richard A. Muller’s definition that true Calvinism requires affirming infant baptism, recognizing the sacraments as means of grace and an amillennial eschatology without which the “famous five” doctrines of Calvinism “make very little sense.”

The writers conclude, “From the perspective of a true Calvinist, Baptists are modified Calvinists at best. Nobody in the SBC measures up to this standard of Calvinism” (page 7).

Multiple views

The five famous doctrines of Calvinism are often expressed in the acrostic TULIP. The letters stand for: 1. Total depravity; 2. Unconditional election; 3. Limited atonement; 4. Irresistible grace; 5. Perseverance of the saints.

Like the term “Calvinist,” disagreement over how the doctrines are defined often is the source of contention among Baptists.

For example, Baptists do not always mean the same thing by “total depravity.” Some Baptists believe that man is so corrupted by sin that disobedience to God is inevitable. Thus they join the apostle Paul in declaring, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Others mean that man is guilty of sin at birth and already separated from God.

The former group generally holds to the concept of an “age of accountability” for sin, a position that God does not hold one accountable for sin until one is old enough to be conscious of sin. The latter believes one is damned to hell from birth without the remission of sin. That is the reason for infant baptism. Those two positions come into sharp contrast when one stands before the open grave of a newborn or a young child.

Unconditional election holds that before the foundation of the earth, God chose some for salvation. Election is not simply foreknowledge, but an active work by God to choose certain individuals for salvation. It is God’s choice alone who will be saved and who will be lost.

Other Baptists believe that an all-knowing God knows who will and will not accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior because God sees all of history, from beginning to end, at the same time. Yet knowing the choice of an individual does not make God responsible for that choice.

Some of Calvin’s disciples went further. They concluded, “If some were chosen before the foundation of the world, others must be left, or passed by, as early.” These pastors teach that God created some for salvation and others for damnation.

The doctrines of predestination and free will collide here in ways yet unexplained.

Limited atonement teaches Jesus died for the sins of the elect only. His sacrifice was not for the sins of the world. Others believe “God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). One’s position here impacts evangelism.

Irresistible grace means those whom God created for salvation will respond to God’s call to salvation. They have no choice. Again some of Calvin’s disciples took the teaching a step further. Some refused to extend gospel invitations lest they cast “gospel pearls before swine” and offend God by offering salvation to the nonelect.

In questioning the meaning of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 came the famous rebuke to William Carey when he was told, “Sit down young man, you are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without consulting you or me.”

Others believe God’s grace is offered to all. The role of preaching is to convey the message of that grace through the death of Jesus on Calvary’s cross so people can freely choose to accept it.

Perseverance of the saints holds the elect will persevere in the faith to the end. Since it is God who does the saving, His work is always perfect and complete. From here comes the commitment to once saved, always saved.

Diversity within unity

Calvinism provides a tightly reasoned theological construct devoted to the sovereignty of God. The system also raises many questions, and every one of those questions is being debated in Alabama Baptist churches today. The issues have not been left in history books. That is why “Calvinism is hot,” as former SBC president Bryant Wright said.

“I don’t think most Southern Baptists are where I am,” Mohler told the editors. He is right. Southern Baptists have always had a mix of Calvinism in their veins. They have also had a mix of other theological understandings. We cannot be conveniently defined into any category other than Baptist.

Any attempt to force one future on us would be a mistake. That is one reason the “Traditional Baptist Understanding of Salvation” statement was helpful to Southern Baptists. It shows there is another way besides Calvinism.



"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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Photo by Brittney Knox

Those in attendance at New Hope Bible School Institute's graduation worship during a performance by Grammy Award-winning singer Karen Clark-Sheard at Samford University's Leslie S. Wright Fine Arts Center in Birmingham on June 15.

By Brittney Knox
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

Learning together

New Hope Bible School Institute presents 108 students with Bible scholar degrees

Tanisha Harvey-Hurst and Matthew Hurst attended class weekly at New Hope Bible School Institute to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible. Their learning was guided by teacher Gregory Clarke, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Birmingham, and headmaster of the Bible school.

After more than a year of study complete with midterms and final exams, the students participated in a special commencement service at Samford University's Leslie S. Wright Fine Arts Center in Birmingham on June 15.

New Hope Baptist Church presented Bible scholar degrees to 108 students. Many will go on to pursue their "master of biblical application" degrees from the school.

Teens to the oldest graduate, age 82, took the free course, which required weekly attendance.

Studying the Bible

"We have studied the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation," Clarke said. "The students have attended classes, maintained a regular attendance and also took pop quizzes similar to a regular college course."

Clarke explained the goal was to combine Sunday School with Bible study and create a Bible school.

At the commencement event, the graduates entered the Wright Center clothed in purple caps and gowns with yellow tassels and marched to the graduation song "Pomp and Circumstance."

As with traditional graduations, these students confirmed their graduation by turning their tassels from the right to the left side.

Harvey-Hurst, salutatorian of the graduation class, decided to take the course after praying for a way to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible.

"As we studied we were able to learn why things happened in the Bible, and each week we were told in class what to read and study," she said. "Then we proceeded to dissect each chapter."

Her husband, Matthew Hurst, also wanted to become more familiar with the Bible.

"It was fun taking the class with my wife," he said. "We were able to learn more about the Bible together from beginning to end."

The graduation event included praise in dance with two dance performances, a valedictorian address and remarks from Mike McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association.

McLemore talked about the benefits of studying God's Word after commending the Birmingham Association church for creating the Bible school and creating disciples of Christ.

"One of the benefits of studying God's Word is that it grants us victory over sin," he said.

McLemore said he learned about the Bible school when he visited New Hope Baptist. He told Clarke that he was very proud of how he was creating disciples through proper teaching.

"I think this event was a pacesetting event

put on by a pastor with a vision," McLemore said. "These students have studied the Bible hard. I have never heard of another event like this one, but I am sure after this the word will spread."

'Connecting the dots'

"Going through the Bible with a group of people certainly helped me," said valedictorian Monica Fuqua. "Pastor Clarke gave great detail and was very specific about what was going on in the chapters and why things were happening. He was great at connecting the dots."

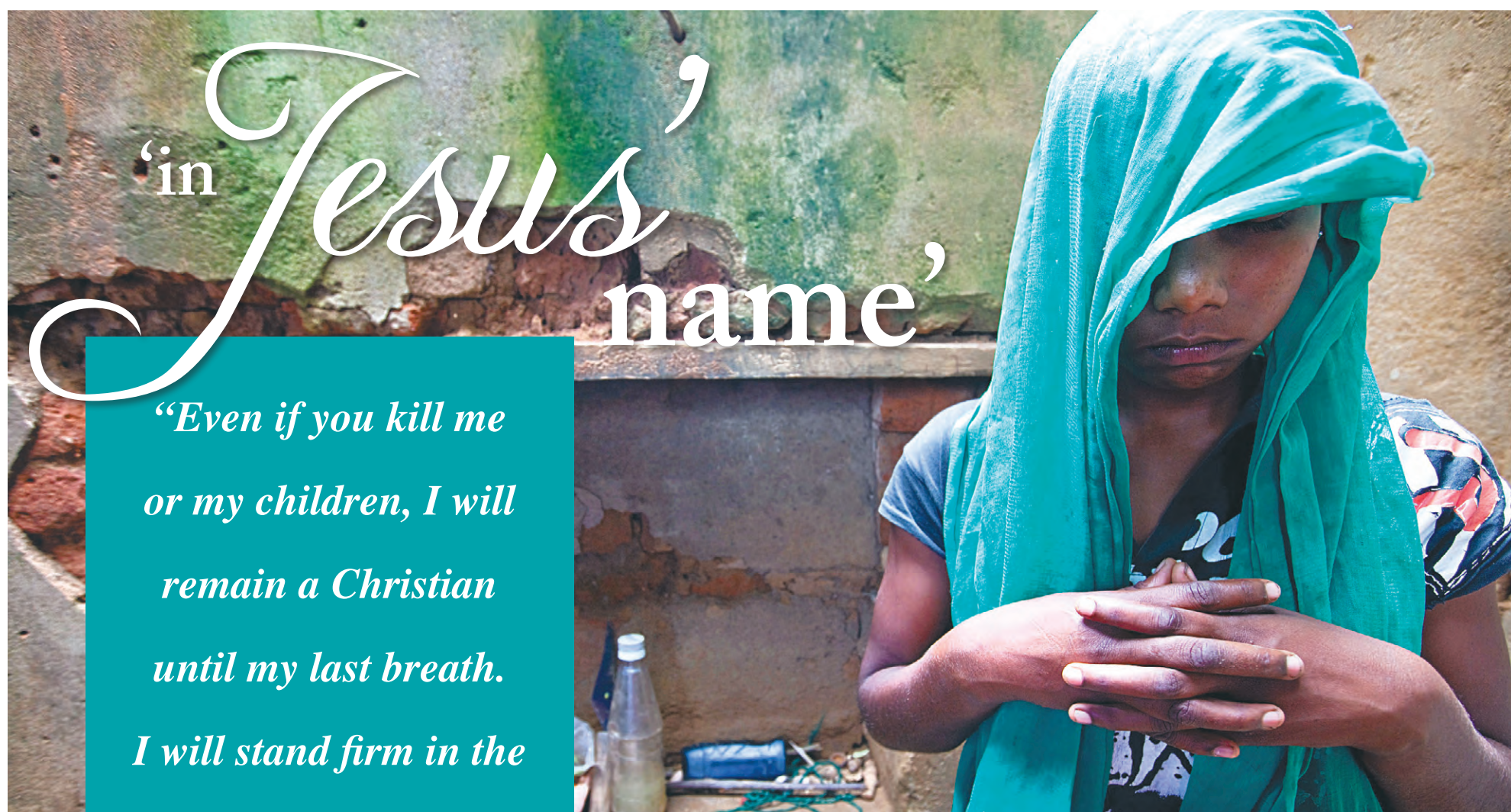
A celebratory event followed the graduation and featured gospel comedian Broderick Rice, songs from New Hope's mass choir and a finale performance by Grammy Award-winning singer Karen Clark-Sheard.

Clarke said the church decided to have not only a graduation but also a celebration. "We love music and we love to laugh, so we produced a lineup to have good, clean Christian fun," he said.

Rice filled the room with laughter, and audience members gave shouts of "Amen" and "Hallelujah" throughout the music performances.

Sheard told the audience after performing her hit single "Glorious" that she was filled with the Spirit to see her brothers and sisters in Christ so excited about praising the Lord at the event.

Clarke and his administrators are preparing for the next class that begins Aug. 7. Prospective students can contact the New Hope Baptist office for information at 205-925-9393. ■



*“Even if you kill me
or my children, I will
remain a Christian
until my last breath.
I will stand firm in the
truth of Jesus Christ.”*

IMB photo
Despite persecution, this teenage girl and her family remain the sole followers of Jesus in their village.

Pastor plants churches with terrorist in India

Criminals sit jam-packed in a filthy Indian holding cell. The smell of urine permeates the dank air. Two bedraggled men in the corner stand out — not because of their threadbare clothes or clean-cut features but because of their actions. Pabitra Kata hums a hymn while Niladri Kanhar prays. Their alleged crime: “proselytizing,” trying to convert others to their religion.

Local authorities accuse the two of coercing a Hindu man into becoming a Christian. Neither denies that he was sharing a Bible story, but the word “coercion” makes them shake their heads in disbelief.

Claiming Christianity here in India’s Orissa State means persecution and brutal beatings. Both men have the scars to prove it. Kanhar has an eight-inch scar along his right side; Kata sports a hairless, jagged line above his right ear where his head is caved in from a beating.

Kata glances at his friend, deep in prayer, and remembers his own fervent prayer that started their journey six years ago.

“Lord, give me just one family to build Your church on,” Kata begged God in 2005. “We need a family that can stand strong like a rock — like Your disciple Peter.”

The Holy Spirit answered by leading the pastor up a mountain path and through the forest. When he stopped at the edge of a well-known terrorist village, Kata couldn’t believe it. This paramilitary group often killed or terrorized Christians in a nationalistic effort to keep India strictly Hindu. To make matters worse, one of the most feared leaders lived in this village. He destroyed churches, beat or raped Christians and even killed them.

“Surely,” Kata thought, “God isn’t this crazy!”

Obviously, he made a wrong turn in the forest, Kata thought. The pastor walked back home, pleading the entire way for just one family.

Inside the village, Kanhar sat in his house, a broken and angry man. All five of his children were sick. Despite his

powerful position as the local terrorist leader, there was nothing he could do to make things better for his family. He already had tried everything — medical doctors, offerings at the Hindu temple and witchcraft. He gave all his money and possessions to one of the gods but nothing changed. When Kanhar consulted this god one last time, it told him someone in his house would die.

“I did everything you asked. We have become beggars and still we are suffering,” Kanhar screamed. “If you are not able to save us, go away and send us someone who can!”

The pastor sat straight up in bed. The vivid dream startled him awake. It was as if someone called out to him. He replayed the fragmented images in his head: a mountain path, a village and a falling tree. The tree pointed to the terrorist leader’s mud-packed home that emanated sorrow and mourning.

Kata dressed and told his wife that a family needed prayer. Then he scurried up the mountain path to the most feared home in the region.

He arrived too late. Kanhar’s eldest daughter had died during the night. The terrorist leader’s wife met the pastor at the door, explaining her husband took the body to the hospital for a death certificate. She advised Kata to leave before her husband returned. Kanhar hated Christians, and she didn’t want to see anyone else die today. She had enough pain inside her for a lifetime.

Just pray

The pastor pleaded with the mourning mother not to give up hope. They just needed to pray. She said she didn’t know how, so he urged her to repeat “in Jesus’ name” throughout the night. He promised to return at 10 a.m. the next day to meet the girl in person.

The next morning, Kanhar and his daughter walked hand-in-hand up the path to their home. The pastor wasn’t surprised, but no one else could believe their eyes. The doctors had pronounced her dead, but now she ran to hug her mother.

Kanhar eyed the strange man standing at their door. Kata smiled, extended his hand and said, “I’m your new friend, Pabitra Kata.”

Recognition registered on Kanhar’s face. His orders were to kill this pastor in the quest to wipe out Christianity. His eyes wandered around the yard, searching for anything he could use as a weapon.

“We hate Jesus here,” the terrorist stated, moving toward the pastor.

Kanhar’s wife stepped between them, explaining the pastor’s prayers brought their daughter back to life. She boldly told her husband that now she, too, believed in Jesus and prayed in His name.

The terrorist reluctantly listened to his wife’s story and halfheartedly agreed to believe. After all, what choice did they have? The pastor’s God had healed their daughter when nothing else worked.

By 5 p.m., though, Kanhar truly had given his heart to God. Just as the pastor predicted, his four other bedridden



IMB photo
Shoes are scattered across the front entrance of a house church in India. So many people attend that they spill out of the doorway.

children got up to play — they were healed, too.

“My family is healthy. This is a miracle of God,” the terrorist announced. “From this day, our household will worship only Him.”

Each night, Kata sneaked through the forest to the terrorist village. He ducked past guards looking for him and slipped in Kanhar’s back door. The family of seven sat waiting to learn new Bible stories and to pray.

Kanhar soaked up every lesson like a sponge. He had never felt so much peace in his life. Even though his neighbors were angry with him for bringing the shame of Christianity to the village, he openly shared his newfound faith.

Gradually more people attended the nightly meetings. The paramilitary group tried to block this multiplication by fining anyone who talked to Kanhar 10,000 rupees (\$200) — more money than most made in a year.

One night as Kata left the prayer meeting, a group of men grabbed and bound him. They dragged him along the paved road, finally stopping in a clearing where 30 others with clubs and sticks in hand waited to join the attack.

The men blamed the pastor for “turning” their former leader. They beat and kicked the crumpled man so violently that his head bounced off their clubs like a cricket ball and ricocheted off the pavement. They broke ribs and bashed in one side of his head.

Praying through pain

The pastor’s screams pierced the silent night, yet no one came to his rescue.

“God, like your servant Stephen, I am ready,” Kata prayed through the pain. When heaven did not open, the pastor changed his prayer. “Help me stand firm. Use me to build Your church here!”

Police picked Kata’s battered body up off the road and took him to the station. They threatened to charge him with “converting Hindus.” But in the end they told him not to return to Kanhar’s village or next time, he would surely die.

Despite the warning, Kata continued meeting with the former terrorist leader for Bible study. At one of their prayer times, the pastor looked at his student through still-swollen eyes and predicted, “You will have to suffer worse than me for your faith.”

Kanhar couldn’t believe what he heard. He was already sneaking in and out for the daily discipleship. After another entire family proclaimed Christianity, the village had forced his family to leave and filed charges against him for “conversions.” He couldn’t find work to feed his family. His brothers disowned him. Even his children were forced to leave school. How could it get worse?

It didn’t take long for the pastor’s words to come true. One day as Kanhar worked in the field, a group of men carrying machetes chased him down. They bound their former leader and forced him to kneel.

He looked up to see 50 men throwing large stones at him. Kanhar prayed. The angry mob took aim but none of the stones touched the Christian. Kanhar lifted a prayer of thanksgiving that enraged the men. They rushed at him swinging clubs and machetes. Blood pooled quickly around him.

“Stop!” a man yelled. “He deserves a slow death for what he has brought to our village.”

With that they divided into two teams, taking turns kicking and clubbing. At one point the men urinated on Kanhar, causing his open wounds to sting and burn. They broke his leg and placed a poisonous plant on his eyes to increase the pain.

“If you don’t come back to Hinduism, you will die,” a man told him.

“Even if you kill me or my children, I will remain a Christian until my last breath,” Kanhar countered. “I will stand firm in the truth of Jesus Christ.”

Holding to that declaration has not been easy. For the two friends, persecution is simply the cost of sharing the gospel with their community. Beatings, the loss of jobs and threatened jail time are expected.

The “good days” come when someone professes Jesus as Savior. Those days make walking through the hard ones possible.

Kata sees the bailiff approaching and stands up. It’s time for their case. The judge glances through the papers and then sternly warns them about proselytizing. He surprises everyone, however, by dropping all charges against the two Christians.

The friends thank God and rush out the door. There’s no time for celebration; they are late for evangelism training at the church. (IMB)

Believer in Central Asia continues sharing Christ behind prison walls

Dad, I think we’re being followed.” Yasemin drummed her fingers nervously on the car door. Her father kept on driving the familiar route to drop her off at English class, singing a praise song to Jesus as he drove.

Yasemin turned around and looked back.

“Dad, we’re being followed.”

He sang louder.

Not missing a beat, he changed songs midverse and belted out lyrics of his own: “I’m going to prison today!”

James knew the signs. He’d already been in prison once for his faith in Jesus. That day made it a second.

In the region where James and his family live in Central Asia, people bend over backward to show hospitality. Go to a neighbor’s home and they spread out a feast, heaping a visitor’s plate high with food.

“In lieu of an armored car, I’ve seen cars left unattended with the trunk open and piles of cash inside,” a friend of James said. “No one would dare bother it.”

In his country, they take care of each other. But share Christ openly and they may torture you.

“James has been blindfolded, handcuffed and held in solitary confinement,” his friend said.

Officials interrogated him, asking why he left his former religion.

At the beginning of his imprisonment, he was put in a small jail cell at night, his hands released just long enough for him to eat a small piece of bread and drink one liter of water. But James hardly slept; he stayed awake praying and singing praises, just as he did in the hot room during the daytime.

But he has seen a lot of people saved — many of them from places where he could never get access to go and share his faith. One of them had heard part of the gospel message nine years earlier, and when he met James in prison he heard the whole message and believed on the spot.

“This man had been waiting for nine years to hear the rest of the gospel, just wanting to meet someone who could tell him,” James’ friend said.

The guards came and began to beat the new believer.

Christian released from jail due to no fear of death

By Lin Sung with Susie Rain

Evangelism student in Asia

One day I was out sharing the gospel in some small Chinese villages. Suddenly the police surrounded us. They grabbed me and threw me in the back of a van.

“We know that you have been trained for Christian evangelism, and we are taking you in,” they told me.

There was not much I, a simple farmer, could do so I just leaned back onto the seat and prayed. That’s when God gave me an idea. I took the training notes out of my book and stuffed them into the cracks and crevices of the van.

When we arrived at the station they tried processing me, but they couldn’t find the evidence. Even without proper evidence, they threw me in jail. The officials told me that all I had to do to get my freedom was to recant my beliefs. I refused.

They chained me to a pole. For the first few days, they did not give me water or food. Finally, they brought me food — but there was nothing to drink.

When the guard came with my food that night, I asked if I could clean the kitchen. They were surprised by the offer and granted my wish. They took me into a room where dirty dishes were piled high. As soon as the officers left and locked the door behind them, I lunged for the sink.

I put my face into the dirty dishwater and took a long drink. I did not care about the pieces of food floating in the water. This is how I survived — drinking dirty dishwater — and I was thankful that God provided for my needs.

“He cried out for Jesus to rescue him, and he stood firm,” James’ friend said.

James is seeing more people come to faith in Jesus Christ during his months-long imprisonment than in the rest of his 20 years as a believer, his friend said.

When James’ wife Ashti and Yasemin got to visit him in prison, tears ran down their faces. He prayed for comfort for them, then told them he had a job for them to do.

“He said a man had come to believe in Jesus and wanted his wife to know,” Ashti said. “He asked James to get us to go and share with his wife.”

With nerves on edge, Ashti and Yasemin loaded up the car and went straight to her house from the prison.

“I didn’t know what we were going to do, how we were going to tell her or how we would be received,” Ashti said. “But when we got there, she said, ‘I want very much to hear what you have come to tell me — there is light all around you and I want to know why.’”

Ashti knows the difference that the Light — Jesus — can make. She herself came to faith when she encountered the Light during childbirth, seven years after James first believed in Christ.

Gospel of John

He was a devout Muslim — even to the point of planning terrorism — before someone gave him a copy of the Gospel of John.

In the middle of the night he lit a lamp, got the book from the shelf and started reading while his family slept. By the following year he was a wholehearted follower of Jesus.

And now James and Ashti’s children have met Jesus, which has helped greatly with understanding why their father is in prison.

But they still struggle with his absence.

James has made such an impact on his fellow prisoners that many of them, after their release, have traveled great distances to let James’ family know he’s safe, his friend said. But they know God put him in jail with those men so that their families could also know the truth, his friend added. (BP)

The persecution and torture continued. I was interrogated day after day. Each time they tried to get me to recant my faith. I refused to denounce Jesus as my Lord. Then they chained me outside the jail to a tree.

During the day the hot sun scorched me. At night mosquitoes feasted on me. I was miserable and my body was weak.

Finally they sent two officers to finish me off. They were big and muscled. They beat up my fragile body without even breaking a sweat.

“This is your last chance,” the big officer said. “Denounce Jesus and gain your freedom.” I looked straight into his eyes and replied, “Your methods will not work on me. I decided to die for Jesus the day I decided to follow Him.”

I immediately felt the tension around my neck loosen. The guards were shocked at my outburst. They looked at each other and shook their heads in disbelief. The big, burly officer took his foot off my neck and pulled me upright.

“This guy has no fear of death,” the officer said to his partner. “Let’s let him go. No amount of persecution is going to change him. It is useless.”

They unlocked the chains and let me go home.

Brothers and sisters, I share my story to encourage all believers to stand firm in the faith. God is victorious! (IMB)

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed in both stories above.

'Uplift God's kingdom'

FBC Falkville VBS leader balances home, church life

In the choir loft of First Baptist Church, Falkville, in Morgan County, the Baptist Association sat an actual airplane on display. The display was used by the church as part of this year's LifeWay Christian Resources' "Amazing Wonders Aviation" Vacation Bible School (VBS) held in late June.

Michelle Ferrell directs the church's VBS and asked Pastor Greg Burcham if his airplane could be used to get kids excited about VBS.

"Our pastor is a pilot and has a small airplane, and after I talked with him he agreed to allow us to use the plane for the VBS display," she said.

Burcham described Ferrell as an energetic, visionary VBS director. Under Ferrell's leadership, the amount of children registered has nearly tripled.

At the end of the VBS, 116 learners were registered and six children were saved, which is the most First, Falkville, has ever had come to Christ during VBS. The church also is in contact with the families of 10 children who do not have church homes.

"We started to have VBS at night and serve a full supper," Ferrell said about some of the changes they made to continue to grow their VBS. "We also print out fliers that we give to a local school that they send home to families, and we use



Photos courtesy of FBC Falkville



FERRELL

REACHING CHILDREN — FBC Falkville uses Pastor Greg Burcham's personal airplane in its Vacation Bible School display. The church saw six children get saved.

Facebook as a promotional tool."

Ferrell is a longtime member of her church.

"She coordinates getting the materials, recruits the people and gets people excited about it," Burcham said.

According to Ferrell, leading VBS has helped her own spiritual growth because she has begun to pray more throughout the day.

"I get up in the morning and have prayer time, and I know some of the goals I have set for this VBS would not have been reached without prayer," she said.

Ferrell, a mother of two girls and former Army wife whose husband

is now retired, began directing VBS three years ago for First, Falkville.

"The first year I directed VBS, it began on the day my husband came back from his deployment," Ferrell said. "This called for me to balance activities with my VBS workers who are great people."

As a mother who balances home obligations and is active in church, Ferrell urges others to do the same to uplift God's kingdom.

"I hope other young mothers will not be afraid to get involved in church, find someone who can help guide them in leading a project as I did and jump right in to give it their very best," she said. (TAB)

Across Alabama's Associations

BETHEL

► **Lamorn Church, Catherine**, will celebrate its anniversary July 29, 11 a.m. with a fifth Sunday lunch and bluegrass gospel singing after lunch. Benny Harrison is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Overton**, will hold a block party/fish fry July 28, noon-3 p.m. There will be free lunch and games for the children. Jimmy Ray is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will hold revival July 16-20. Services will begin at 10:30 a.m. and evening services at 7 p.m. Chad Allbright will speak. Lunch will be served each day after the morning service. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Ulcunush Church, Coffeeville**, will hold revival July 29, 11 a.m., and Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. Larry Cox will speak. The church also will celebrate homecoming August 5, 11 a.m.

Lunch will follow. Jesse Griffith is pastor. ► **Pineview Church, Thomasville**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary July 29 during homecoming. Ty Parten will speak. Lunch will be served following the morning service. Mitch Thrower is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will hold revival July 22-25. Wallace Russell will preach. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. with dinner on the grounds following and again at 6:30 p.m., and Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. Hosea Parker is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **Bethel Church, Welch**, will celebrate homecoming July 29, 10:30 a.m. Dale Wood, director of missions for East Liberty Association, will speak. James Brown will lead music. Lunch will follow. The church also will hold revival July 30-Aug. 1, 7 p.m. Jimmy Brown is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgom-**

ery, will host The Kempters in concert July 29, 5:30 p.m. A salad and dessert fellowship will follow. Chad Underwood is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Calvary Heights Church, Alexander City**, will host singer Sherri Blackerby July 29, 10 a.m. Jeff Freeman is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Northside Church, Opelika**, will celebrate homecoming July 29, 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. Revival will be July 30-Aug. 1, 6:30 p.m. Terry Heron, associate pastor and minister of music for Lake Martin Church, Dadeville, will speak. Wayne Ivey is pastor. ► **Liberty Church, Opelika**, will celebrate homecoming July 29, 11 a.m. Revival services will start that evening and continue through Aug. 1, 6:30 p.m. Steve Sheerer and Mike May will lead music. Frank Chappell, pastor of Waverly Church, will speak. Tommy Wilson is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

SBOM's Mizzell retiring after 21 years at post

As he prepares for retirement from his position as director of the office of Christian ethics at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), Joe Bob Mizzell is thankful for accomplishing much more than he could have hoped for or imagined.

"I think that God is extremely great and wonderful that He could use someone with so little talent like me to accomplish so much for His kingdom," he said. "I came out of a very poor home. No one had an education except one of my sisters."

Mizzell was saved at age 11, called to preach at 18 years old and named pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Maplesville, at age 19.

He received his bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham then began teaching junior high school and coaching football, basketball and baseball. He earned a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Alabama.

After graduating from seminary he spent the next 27 years leading several Alabama Baptist churches including First Baptist Church, Guin; First Baptist Church, Childersburg; and Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

During this time he began a new ministry as a chaplain in the Army National Guard, a military career that spanned 24 years.

Twenty-one years ago, Mizzell became the first person to serve in his current position at the SBOM. Some of his duties have included promoting the World Hunger Offering, training and deploying chaplains for disaster relief, working with the Christian Life Commission and serving as liaison for the state convention's resolutions committee. He considers his role in helping defeat the lottery in 1999 one of the most important highlights of his SBOM ministry.

When Mizzell officially retires Aug. 15, he plans to return to full-time ministry as pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion, where he currently serves as interim pastor. He also will continue working with Joe Godfrey and Dan Ireland through Alabama Citizens Action Program. His SBOM colleagues say he will be missed.

"I first met Joe Bob Mizzell while I was a student at New Orleans [Baptist Theological] Seminary," said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director. "My first impression of him was that of a friendly Christian gentleman and a faithful servant of the Lord. In the decades since that initial encounter, my impression of him was even more concrete concerning these admirable traits as well as others. He has been an excellent communications liaison between the SBOM and the churches in the Alabama Baptist family." (Sondra Washington)

Trussville's CrossPoint helps rebuild Williams Chapel

On June 8 a construction ministry team from CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville, finished its work on a new building for Williams Chapel Church, Greensboro. Team members completed the interior and exterior framing, finished decking and shingles on the roof, put up exterior vinyl siding, installed windows and doors and insulated the building — in just over four days.

Williams Chapel's original structure was destroyed by a tornado April 15, 2011. In March, Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, contacted CrossPoint's construction ministry about the church.

"The church needed complete rebuilding ... it had no foundation or anything," said Melissa Freeman, leader of CrossPoint's construction ministry team.

The team met with representatives of Williams Chapel in March to discuss and finalize the church's plans for a new building. Then on June 4 CrossPoint's team — including volunteers from Illinois, Kentucky and Georgia — descended on the town to work.

"When you have people who are working for God and want to work, it's amazing to see what happens," Freeman said.

Alabama Circuit Judge Marvin Wiggins, a member of Williams Chapel, oversaw the project from the church's end.

"The volunteers had already assigned out labor, so we were support staff," he said.

Williams Chapel members provided food, refreshments and additional labor to the teams and acquired any extra resources the builders needed. Some work remains to be done with the church's Sheet-rock, painting and a brick facade for the front, but Wiggins expected the church to be able to meet in the building in July.

"Words can't describe the blessing we've received," he said.

(Joseph Rhea)



MIZZELL



Photo by Judy Conaway

Volunteers from Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist Church, Hurtsboro, and Alabama Campers on Mission raise the first wall.



Photo by Jerry Thompson

(L to r) Russell Ray, of Shorter; Dell Thompson, of Wedowee; Alan Wagner, of Green Cove Springs, Fla.; Lendon Scott, of Dothan; Randy Harrison, of Dothan; Ken Conaway, of Wedowee; and 108-year-old Julia Cochran, of Hurtsboro take part in the 7 a.m. prayer circle.

Alabama CAMPERS *on* MISSION

Volunteer construction team helps rebuild Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist Church

For Pastor Curtis Carlisle, the word “thanks” just seems inadequate to say for the construction work an Alabama Campers on Mission (ALCOM) team recently completed at his church, Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist Church, Hurtsboro, in Russell County.

From June 14 to 29, the days were filled with endless activity at the church site as the ALCOM team devoted time and energy to build a new sanctuary and fellowship hall.

The existing Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist structure had extensive termite damage as well as roof damage. According to Ken Conaway, ALCOM co-project coordi-

nator at the site, it was determined it would cost less to rebuild entirely rather than to repair the existing building.

During the project, the ALCOM team dried in the new structure, put in siding and installed windows and doors.

Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist is believed to date back more than 150 years. The new church building will be located at a different spot on the property, and Carlisle noted that design plans for the new church also vary from the old structure.

The new building will hold 250–300 people in the sanctuary and about 200 in the fellowship hall and will be the third known structure in the church’s history.

The all-volunteer ALCOM team of about 20 represented many areas of the state,

including Fort Payne, Eufaula, Dothan, Elberta, Shorter, Montgomery and Union Springs. There were also volunteers from Jacksonville, Fla.

ALCOM volunteers travel in their RVs for missions projects. For construction projects like the one at Mount Missouri Missionary Baptist, the church pays for the building materials and ALCOM volunteers the labor.

‘Work wherever’

“We’re just a group of mostly retired people” and go and work wherever the Lord wants us to go, explained Pete McKnight, president of ALCOM.

Conaway reported that 260 individuals contributed a total of 46,552 hours to

ALCOM projects in 2011. Thirty-three construction jobs were completed and more than 25,000 gospel tracts were distributed at a number of events where ALCOM volunteers served. Volunteers were integral in disaster relief and house construction work following the April 2011 tornadoes that devastated many parts of the state.

In addition to the construction work at Mount Missouri Missionary, the ALCOM wives assisted at the site in numerous ways. According to ALCOM volunteer and Ken Conaway’s wife, Judy, the women sewed reversible dresses from donated fabrics that will be sent to Third World countries.

“We are surely blessed by God to have them (ALCOM) here,” Carlisle reported during the construction. (TAB)

Annual church safety poster contest open for young artists

Church youth groups and young artists across the country once again have the opportunity to display their creativity and awareness of church safety in GuideOne Insurance’s annual “Keeping America’s Churches Safe” poster and calendar contest.

Hosted by the GuideOne Center for Risk Management, the contest encourages youth to draw, color or paint pieces

of artwork that represent important safety and security issues in churches. Entrants have the chance to win \$50 if their drawing is selected as one of 13 pictures to be displayed in the 2013 calendar.

Posters should depict a situation focusing on travel safety, fire prevention, storm and weather preparation, playground and playroom rules, youth camp safety, protecting elderly members or other church safety and security scenarios. “The contest is a great way to engage children in a fun project that encourages both church involvement and safety awareness,” said Eric Spacek, senior manager of risk management and loss control at GuideOne.

Artists must be under the age of 18 to enter, and pictures should be drawn horizontally on an 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet of paper. A separate sheet of paper with the artist’s full name, age, phone number, personal mailing address and church name should be included with each entry.

Entries should be created with materials like crayons, markers or paint.

No three-dimensional, electronically created, glued or stapled posters will be accepted. Pictures should be mailed in a large envelope since entries may not be folded or creased.

Entry guidelines

All entries must be postmarked by July 31, 2012, to be eligible for judging. Please mail entries to GuideOne Insurance, Attn: Natalie McCormick, 1111 Ashworth Road, West Des Moines, IA 50265.

The 13 winners will be announced by mid-August. Each winner will receive a \$50 check and have their artwork featured in the 2013 “Keeping America’s Churches Safe” calendar, of which they all will receive 10 copies to share with friends and family.

Founded in 1947 and headquartered in West Des Moines, Iowa, GuideOne Insurance is one of the nation’s largest church insurers, with about 43,000 church policyholders. For more information, visit GuideOne.com. (GuideOne)

Posters should depict one of the following situations

- ▶ travel safety
- ▶ fire prevention
- ▶ storm and weather preparation
- ▶ playground and playroom rules
- ▶ youth camp safety
- ▶ protecting elderly members
- ▶ other church safety and security scenarios



Church Initiative financial program seeks to improve accountability, stewardship

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The local church has a great responsibility to manage its resources effectively and the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) hopes to assist through Church Initiative, a program to help churches of all sizes improve their financial stewardship.

"Fraud is on the increase in churches, and a lack of accountability continues to be a black eye to the gospel," said Dan Busby, president of ECFA. "ECFA's new Church Initiative is essential for leading churches to faithfully demonstrate their commitment to established standards in financial accountability, fundraising and board governance."

Busby said that financial mismanagement has marred the witness of some churches around the country and that the media is often quick to highlight the negative actions of a few churches or pastors.

"The positive ministry of most congregations across the country is overlooked," he said.

"But when congregations place a high focus on accountability, transparency and integrity, there is a stronger likelihood of sound practices that will uplift the name of Christ," Busby said.

Under the Church Initiative, a new fee schedule makes the accreditation process more affordable for local church congregations. Smaller congregations unable to take advantage of accreditation services can subscribe to ChurchWise,

a three-tiered subscription service that provides access to information on church-related governance, finances and stewardship, as well as webinar training.

In addition ECFA's website has been revamped to make it simpler for churches to access the information they need to be more accountable to their members and to the public. Non-accredited churches also can register with ECFA to receive a free monthly electronic newsletter and informational briefs regarding IRS and government changes in tax law and other issues affecting churches and nonprofits.

Though no Alabama Baptist churches are currently ECFA accredited, many nonprofit organizations in Alabama are, including The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA) and Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH).

TBFA President Barry Bledsoe said adherence to ECFA's high standards of financial accountability are part of TBFA's testimony of "doing things the right way."

"There's certainly a need in the church world for that," Bledsoe said.

There are no concrete numbers on how much money churches around the country lose annually due to internal theft. Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said his office often follows cases of church theft that have made national news. Since Alabama Baptist churches

function autonomously, he said the SBOM would only know of cases in Alabama if legal action was taken by the church and the facts of the case became public.

Still DuBois said the SBOM continually encourages churches to implement stronger internal controls to guard against theft and misappropriation of church money.

"In many churches, especially smaller churches, you have one person who will take the money from the offering plate, count the money, make the deposit and report to the church," DuBois said. "There is no auditing or internal control of the finances."

DuBois said churches that lose the trust of their members and community will lose financial support as well, and without financial support, he said, most churches would not exist.

"If a church gives the appearance that money is not being handled wisely, giving will dry up, and it will have an adverse impact on the church in terms of its stewardship," DuBois said.

While not all churches may benefit from accreditation, the goal of Church Initiative is that churches both small and large can benefit from ECFA's experience and knowledge in the area of financial accountability.

A biblical standard

Ultimately, said ABCH vice president for ministry development Bob Dewhurst, ECFA encourages organizations to uphold a biblical standard of Christian stewardship in order to maintain the public's trust.

"It's God's money, God's resources and God's people," Dewhurst said. "As Christian organizations, it's our responsibility to manage all of it well."

For more information about ECFA, visit www.ecfa.org or call 1-800-323-9473.

"Fraud is on the increase in churches, and a lack of accountability continues ..."

**Dan Busby
ECFA president**

'The Blind Side' removal brings backlash

LifeWay Christian Resources' recent decision to no longer stock "The Blind Side" DVD on bookstore shelves has struck a nerve with Christian authors.

Rachel Held Evans, who was asked by Thomas Nelson Publishers to remove a word describing the female anatomy from her upcoming book "A Year of Biblical Womanhood" in deference to Christian bookstore standards, said it points to a "chokehold" the stores hold on the Christian publishing industry.

Evans said Christian bookstores have developed a reputation for "a highly sanitized customer experience."

"What most people don't realize, however, is that the problem of sanitized Christian bookstores extends far beyond the inventory on

the shelves to create an entire Christian subculture that is so sanitized and safe it often fails to produce art that is relevant to our culture or our lives," Evans wrote in a recent blog posting.

Eric Metaxas, author of the New York Times No. 1 bestseller "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy," described a Christian publishing industry that is "heading for cultural irrelevance."

"For outsiders looking in, the moral of the story is that: 'There is no pleasing Christians. They always seem to be looking for something to be mad about,'" Metaxas wrote.

"It's difficult to imagine how we Christians can hope to be taken seriously in cultural discussions and debates with this kind of an approach."

Marty King, director of commu-

nications for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) publisher, said officials have heard different perspectives from customers about the decision to remove the movie.

"We agree the movie as a whole promotes Christian values and a redemptive message, however it does contain instances of street language and racial slurs against African-Americans," King said.

King said LifeWay decided in June to stop selling the movie after nearly two years because of likelihood it would become a focus of debate and division at the recent SBC annual meeting in New Orleans. "We were electing the Southern Baptist Convention's first African-American president, and did not want to distract from that historic moment," he said. (ABP)

Why I RECOMMEND The Alabama Baptist

I was a member of Harbor City Baptist Church, Melbourne, Fla., when God began to speak to my heart about full-time Christian service. It was also then that I took notice of *The Florida Baptist Witness*, the state paper for the Florida Baptist Convention. My mother received it as a ministry of my home church.

Reading that paper each week broadened my view and perspective of what God was doing in His larger Kingdom on earth. What I learned in Sunday School, Training Union, RAs and choir ministry seemed to come alive on a bigger stage. I realized how connected I was through my local church to the association, the state convention and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). It was amazing to read about what Baptists did together.

For the past 34 years I have served two churches in our beloved state of Alabama. It has been my privilege to receive

The Alabama Baptist all this time. This award-winning newspaper filled with testimonies of individuals and churches has many times inspired me to greater service or given me ideas to use in our church.

The reporting of the larger work of *The Alabama Baptist*



Pastor Travis Coleman Jr.
First Baptist Church, Prattville

in our churches, our associations, our institutions and our entities, as well as our SBC

family, has reminded me time and time again of the importance of our connections.

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our Cooperative Program dollars.

Thank you, *The Alabama Baptist*, for all you do to serve God's people, His church and the greater Kingdom of believers. Thank you for faithfully reporting to us what Alabama Baptists do together.

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Email 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.





BWA photo



BWA photo

Left: Attendees at the Baptist World Alliance annual meeting worship together in Santiago, Chile. **Above:** A folklore group participates during an evening of culture and celebration July 2.

BAPTIST FAMILY *'We are one'*

Baptist leaders worldwide gather for Baptist World Alliance annual meeting in Santiago, Chile

Baptist leaders from around the world meeting July 2–7 in Santiago, Chile, endorsed a historic joint agreement drafted by Catholics, mainline Protestants and evangelicals outlining ethical guidelines for Christian witness amid religious diversity and formalized two Baptist World Alliance (BWA) executive staff appointments.

About 300 Baptist leaders were part of the BWA annual gathering.

In an opening celebration service July 2, BWA President John Upton recalled worldwide Baptist support for Chileans during recent crises like the massive Feb. 27, 2010, earthquake and the mining disaster that trapped 33 miners underground for more than two months, from Aug. 5 until Oct. 13. Upton, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, expressed the BWA's joy to be able to come to Chile for its annual gathering of global Baptist leaders.

Delivering his entire greeting in Spanish, BWA General Secretary Neville Callam reminded Chilean Baptists they are one part of one family with other Baptist Christians around the world. "We are one Baptist family, brothers and sisters, witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ," he said.

The guidelines and diversity resolution adopted during the BWA meeting "commends and endorses" a 2011 document titled "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World." Drafted by leaders of the World

Evangelical Alliance, the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Pontifical Council on Inter-religious Dialogue, it is in part a response to criticism leveled at Christians by some religious communities alleging unethical evangelistic methods, in some cases contributing to anti-conversion laws and violence.

The resolution declares that sharing the gospel in both word and deed is imperative to Christ's commission in Matthew 28, but affirms "that violence, bribes and threats or force are incompatible with Christian mission."

It laments "increasing interreligious, political and economic tensions in the world that result in conflicts, bribes, threats, force, violence, war and loss of life" and acknowledges that Christians "are sometimes implicated in these conflicts."

It urges Baptists to treat people of other faiths with respect and to foster "reconciling relationships" with others. It encourages BWA member bodies to study and incorporate practices in the seven-page document in their own context.

Drafted over a five-year period, "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World" rejects deception and "coercive means" of proselytizing in non-Christian societies. It was the first time the three bodies had ever worked together. While affirming the use

of healing ministries in mission, it says such services should not be exploited and denounces "financial incentives and rewards" in evangelism.

Other resolutions commemorated the

200th anniversary of the 1812 journey of Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson and Luther Rice to Asia to serve as missionaries; renewed statements about climate change made by the general council in 2008 and 2009, adding a commitment to seek to reduce the "carbon footprint" of BWA gatherings; and denounced recent bombings of houses of worship and violence carried out in the name of religion in Nigeria.

Since last Christmas, an Islamic sect called Boko Haram has carried out a series of attacks on churches in Nigeria, prompting retaliatory killings of Muslims by Christian youths, police and the military.

The two BWA staff appointments took place July 6.

Rothangliani Rema Chhangte, originally from India but who worked most recently for American Baptist Churches USA, begins Aug. 1 as director of Baptist World Aid, the BWA's relief-and-development arm. She takes over for Paul Montacute, a former youth worker from Great Britain who retires at the end of July after 22 years with the Washington-based BWA.

Chhangte's appointment was made official by the general council, one of several governing bodies within the 221-member body BWA.

Chhangte was first approved for the Baptist World Aid post by the BWA executive committee last March.

"I am humbled by your vote of confidence and thank you and God for giving me this opportunity to be of service to Baptist

churches around the world," Chhangte told the council. "I look forward to working closely with all of you and partnering with you so that together we can make Baptist World Aid the premier relief and development agency for Baptists worldwide."

Chhangte holds a master of divinity from Palmer Theological Seminary, master of business administration from Eastern Uni-

versity and a bachelor's degree from Bethel University, all in the United States. She also has diplomas from the Oxford Graduate Summer School of Theology in the United Kingdom and the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies in Switzerland.

The council also ratified the November 2011 election of Duro Ayanrinola by formally appointing him as the BWA regional secretary for Africa. He was previously director of the Missionary Organization Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

The general council meeting also included presentation of the Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award to Edgar Palacios, a Baptist pastor from El Salvador recognized for peacemaking efforts during that country's 1980–1992 civil war. Palacios, currently a pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, paid tribute to "the heroism and courage of hundreds of leaders of the Salvadorian people ... who gave their lives and talents to achieve justice and peace."

During business sessions prior to the annual meeting, a committee signed two major contracts in preparation for the 21st Baptist World Congress in Durban, South Africa, in 2015. (Compiled from ABP stories)



CHHANGTE



AYANRINOLA

'How so many have done so much'

Local churches, Alabama WMU, WMU Foundation provide peace of mind for St. Clair County family

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For 12-year-old Gabe Wise and his family, severe weather warnings have always signaled the start of a tedious process of moving to a safer location. Now thanks to a cooperative effort between local church volunteers, Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and the WMU Foundation HEART Fund, Gabe and his family can find shelter from the storms a little closer to home.

James Sampley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ashville, in St. Clair Baptist Association, got to know Gabe as a result of the cleanup and rebuilding efforts following the storms of April 2011. The Wises' mobile home was damaged but not destroyed in the storms that moved through the Shoal Creek Valley area of St. Clair County. As volunteers from First, Ashville, and Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, in Birmingham Baptist Association, helped repair the damage, they learned more about the needs of the family.

"Gabe is confined to a wheelchair and dependent on a ventilator to breathe," Sampley said. "His grandfather told me about the procedure they had to go through to get him out of the house and to someone's basement when a storm was coming and then to get him back home once the storm was over."

As a result of that conversation, Sampley began to look for funds to build a storm shelter near the Wise home. He contacted Candace McIntosh, executive director of Ala-

bama WMU, and soon the WMU Foundation was involved as well.

The WMU Foundation provided a \$2,000 grant for building supplies to First, Ashville, through the HEART Fund, a ministry of the foundation that seeks to aid in rebuilding efforts in the United States and around the world after natural disasters. The remaining \$1,500 for supplies was provided by Alabama WMU.

"After some discussion, (WMU Foundation president) David George and I realized this would be a project that we could partner together on," McIntosh said. "It has been wonderful to see how First Baptist, Ashville, and the community have rallied around Gabe."

Though the Wise family attends Bethany Baptist Church, Ashville, in St. Clair Baptist Association, First, Ashville, took the lead in organizing the project. Once the supplies were purchased, a contractor provided his labor to construct the concrete shelter in a hillside near the Wise home. Sampley also hopes to provide a dedicated generator for Gabe's ventilator in the storm shelter.



Photo courtesy of James Sampley

PROTECTION — A concrete storm shelter located in a hillside near Gabe Wise's home provides a safe place for the family should a storm come through the Shoal Creek Valley area again.

"Then all he would have to do is go," Sampley said.

Since the storm damaged the home, volunteers from several churches have replaced siding and insulation and built new decks and ramps to make entering and exiting the house a little easier for Gabe and his family. A central heating and cooling system for the home is also in the works, and Sampley hopes roofing can be installed over the new decks so

that Gabe can get outside more.

Sampley said though Gabe is severely disabled, he shows his joy with an ever-present smile and a friendly wave.

"He cannot speak clearly with many words, but his spirit shouts

with clarity," Sampley said.

George said the cooperative effort has been the best part of the project.

"The real story is how so many have done so much for this family," he said.



Photo courtesy of James Sampley

JOYOUS — Twelve-year-old Gabe Wise shows an ever-present smile.

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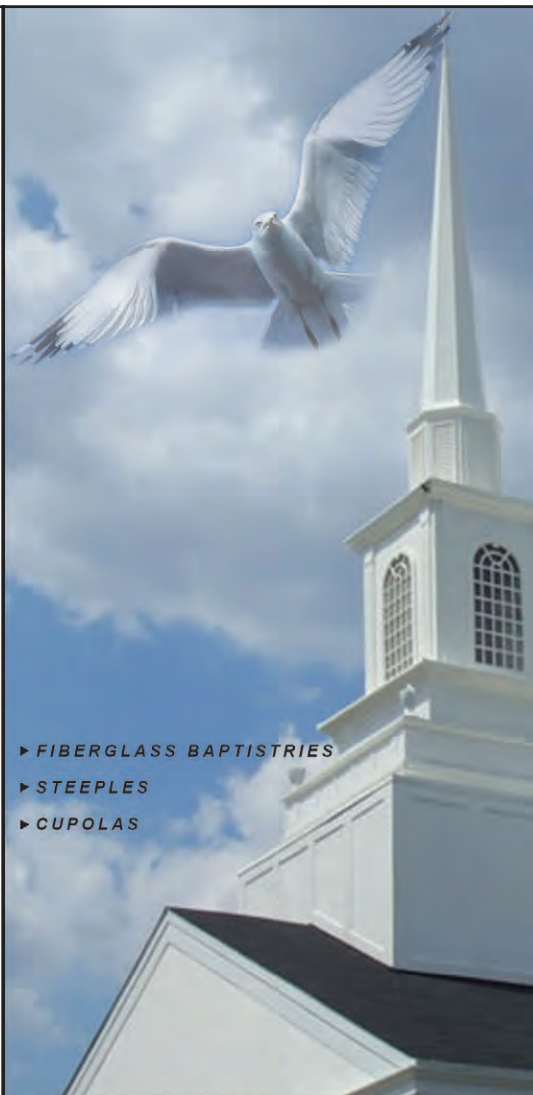
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Compiled from Wire Services

Baptists threatened for sharing faith in Azerbaijan

KHACHMAZ, Azerbaijan — After two separate incidents in neighboring regions of northern Azerbaijan bordering Russia, police have threatened six Baptists with criminal prosecution for sharing their faith with others and handing out religious literature, Baptists who asked not to be identified said. The six are awaiting possible prosecutions in their homes, but the passports of three have been confiscated. Christian literature and a car confiscated from three of them have not been returned.

Azerbaijan imposes strict state controls on all exercise of freedom of religion or belief. All religious activity without state permission is illegal. Religious literature can only be given away or sold if it has passed through the compulsory prior state censorship and only then in specialized state-approved shops. Heavy punishments are imposed for breaking these restrictions.

Three Baptists visiting the northern Khachmaz Region were detained by police on the morning of June 23 and held until 1 a.m. the following morning after they offered Christian literature to passers-by, church members said. They have been threatened with criminal charges and await possible prosecution at home.

The three Baptists — Timofei Aparshev, Nadezhda Ryzhkova and Stepanida Sheludyakova — are all members of the Council of Churches Baptist congregation in the port of Sumgait. Council of Churches congregations refuse on principle to seek state registration in any of the former Soviet republics where they operate.

Assailants attack 2 churches in Kenya; 18 die

GARISSA, Kenya — At least 18 people died while 66 were wounded in Kenya's northeastern town of Garissa on July 1 when assailants burst into the Africa Inland Church (AIC) and Catholic Church, shooting at worshipers with firearms and detonating grenades. Two policemen guarding the AIC churches were among those killed. Four of the injured were initially in critical condition in Nairobi hospitals at press time.

Eyewitnesses told Open Doors USA in telephone interviews that the attackers approached the AIC church, shot the two policemen guarding the church at point blank range, took their guns and started shooting at worshipers.

At the Catholic Church the attackers apparently jumped over a fence and started shooting at people standing near the church. Three church members were killed before the attackers fled.

"These brazen attacks on innocent Christian worshipers are horrific," said Open Doors USA President/CEO Carl Moeller.

Police said they have identified suspects in the attacks.

Massacre killing in 12 villages claims lives of 100 Christians in Nigeria

Tensions in central Nigeria have run high recently between two Nigerian people groups after a massacre killing of some 100 members of the Church of Christ in Nigeria on July 7.

The groups, located in the Plateau state of Nigeria, include ethnic Fulani, who are mainly Muslim, and ethnic Birom, who are mainly Christian. This incident was only the latest outbreak of anger in a decade-long cycle of aggression and reprisals.

But this time, anxiety ran high enough that about 50 members of the Church of Christ in Nigeria around the village of Maseh had fled their homes, taking refuge in the home of their pastor.

The gunmen came July 7, entering the home and opening fire. Then they burned the house.

"Fifty of our church members were killed in the church building where they had fled to take refuge. They were killed alongside the wife of the pastor and children," said Dachollom Datiri, vice president of the Church of Christ in Nigeria, in a July 11 interview with Open Doors USA at the church's headquarters in Jos.

Church officials said that in all, about 100 Church of Christ members were killed in the weekend attacks in 12 villages: Maseh, Ninchah, Kakkuruk, Kuzen, Negon, Pwabiduk, Kai, Ngyo, Kura Falls, Dogo, Kufang and Ruk.

"In these 12 villages, all the church buildings of our church were burnt by the Muslim attackers," Datiri said.

Fulani spokesmen denied involvement. On July 10, the radical Islamic group Boko Haram said it was responsible for the attacks, and insisted all Christians abandon Christ and accept Islam or they "would never know peace again."

The Church of Christ in Nigeria, more than a century old and claiming 3.5 million members in Nigeria and beyond, has suffered before. Some 40 church pastors have been killed in the past 10 years, Datiri said.

Even against such a violent backdrop, the July 7 and 8 killings were



Graphic by Lauren C. Grim

especially traumatizing. The Nigerian government imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew on the region. Still survivors of the violence are fleeing their villages in search of safe places to stay, said Obed Dashan, general secretary of the Church of Christ in Nigeria.

"They are psychologically traumatized, and their productive economic activities are impeded," Dashan told Open Doors. "Most of them are peasant farmers and the attacks have not allowed them to go to their farms. Even those that have planted crops have had their crops destroyed by the Muslim attackers."

Starving Christians

The displaced farmers, Dashan said, "cannot go to their farms because they have to flee in order to save their lives. So it is a war to starve Christians, and this is impacting on the church negatively as we have to feed or cater for our church members who are now displaced."

As families have fled they have taken their children with them.

"Children cannot go to school as they have to flee, thereby creating a generation of illiterates," Dashan said.

The history of conflict between Nigerian Christians and Muslims has roots in land disputes, political opportunism, quarrels over national power sharing and other causes, but the Church of Christ leaders said the current situation is evidence of

an institutionalized persecution of Christians.

"We've heard that the (Nigerian military) is here to provide protection to the weaker side in the conflict between Christians and Muslims," Dashan said. "They have openly said they are here to protect Muslims. However, it is these same Muslims who are being protected that are attacking Christians and destroying our villages and church buildings. There is no single mosque that has been destroyed by Christians and we have never been on the offensive. So, why (are they) aiding Muslims to attack us?"

"It is outrageous," Datiri said, "for the military to abandon peasant Christians who have no weapons to defend themselves and then claim that Muslims, who are the aggressors, are the weaker party and need to be protected."

At the same time, Fulani representatives have told news agencies that Christians have attacked Muslim communities. Christian church leaders across Nigeria have urged believers to refrain from retaliation, though not all have paid heed.

"The whole thing is coming to a head," Datiri said. "It's been a long-term thing planned by the Boko Haram. This is a jihadist movement with the agenda to Islamize the country. It is a jihad, a religious war against Christians for refusing to embrace Islam. So they are using terrorism as a weapon. That is the reason you see that the target of their attacks are Christians and our churches." (BP)

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Sylacauga conference encourages, challenges men

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The phrase, "A man can take the pain, but a real man don't have to," is not grammatically correct, but it served well as the theme for the June 16 Saddle Up! men's conference.

Held at Sylacauga High School, the event was sponsored by ChristPoint Community Church, Sylacauga, in Coosa River Baptist Association. The conference attracted more than 200 men and featured a number of noted speakers.

ChristPoint Pastor Bryan Taunton explained the conference theme. "Men are often emboldened to take the pain of life, to be tough. Men typically think that's what a real man does and they take pride in that belief. But Jesus has taken the pain for us."

Charles Sanders, a member of First Baptist Church, Sylacauga, and a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, served as conference master of ceremonies.

Sanders also spoke twice, using Jesus' temptation experience recorded in Matthew 4 as his text. "We men fight temptation on the battlefield of our minds," Sanders said. "The enemy tempts us with stinking thinking."

Randy Overstreet, pastor of Double Oak Community Church, Mount Laurel, in Shelby Baptist Association shared how his father, an alcoholic, eventually came to faith in Christ. "The arms of God are long. No one is beyond His reach," Overstreet said.

Bobby Jackson, a retired college and professional football coach, challenged guys to read and study their Bibles. "The Bible, B-I-B-L-E, is our basic instructions before leaving earth," Jackson said.

Former University of Alabama (UA) football player Martin Houston lamented the large number of fatherless families in America. "Too many dads are missing in action, just not involved in their homes," Houston said.

Houston played full-back for the 1992 UA national championship team and signed a free-agent contract with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Today Houston directs his teaching ministry, Impact 4 Life.

Bobby Bowden, former head football coach for Florida State University, conveyed the story of Jesus' crucifixion from the Bible. Bowden told conferees, "You need a Savior because being good enough will not get you into heaven."



BOWDEN



BURGESS

Reaching community vital for ChristPoint

Bryan Taunton believes ministering in the community and reaching out to men are two strategies that will grow ChristPoint Community Church, a 2011 church plant he leads as pastor.

"Our name, Community Church, says we will minister to the Sylacauga community. The number one way to reach a town is by reaching its men," explained Taunton.

This congregation, which began with four individuals meeting in a living room, and currently averaging 60 in attendance, is ministering to the community in big ways.

Each Thursday ChristPoint prepares a hot meal for anyone who needs to be fed. In recent days 250 meals are being served weekly. Nancy Smith, a ChristPoint member, coordinates the meal called Café 112.

"I always wanted to operate a restaurant, but an accident prevented me from reaching

this goal. Café 112 is now the restaurant God gave me," Smith said. "We place white tablecloths on the tables so our guests won't feel they are in a soup kitchen," Smith says about 70 percent of those who are fed walk or ride a bike to Café 112.

Last Thanksgiving ChristPoint provided a community meal to 1,500 people. And this past Easter the church dispensed with the normal Easter service and organized a community outreach block party instead.

ChristPoint participates in a community garden ministry called Sylacauga Grows. The church maintains an acre in the garden for growing vegetables that are given to people in need.

Last October the church provided a Prayer Pumpkin Festival outreach to the city. Anyone who let ChristPoint members pray for them walked away with a free pumpkin. Ice cream was served, and gift boxes were distributed to those who came.

Jill McCarter, a ChristPoint

member, says the best part of attending ChristPoint is the opportunities to serve. "We have such a missions field right here in our own community and we didn't even realize it," McCarter said.

In 2011 ChristPoint received the annual Glenn Stephens Award from the city of Sylacauga for the church's community ministry.

Reaching men

The Saddle Up! men's conference aimed to fulfill ChristPoint's second focus, reaching out to men. At the conference, 22 men made decisions for Christ.

Taunton explained that men have a great amount of influence in their homes. But the large number of broken homes today has resulted in men failing to lead their families. "If we reach the men, we have a much greater chance of impacting their homes," Taunton said. (TAB)

Resolution applauding SBC for Luter election introduced in U.S. Senate

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., has introduced a congressional resolution congratulating the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) for electing as president Fred Luter Jr., the first African-American to hold the post.

Landrieu notes the historical significance of Luter's election and honors the SBC's commitment to ethnic inclusion. Luter is pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

"Whereas the election of Reverend Luter brings great pride and honor to the membership of the Southern Baptist Convention," the resolution reads in part, "be it resolved that the Senate congratulates the Southern Baptist Convention for electing Reverend Fred Luter, Jr., as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention; acknowledges Reverend Luter's unique role as the first African-

American leader of the Southern Baptist Convention; and honors the commitment of the Southern Baptist Convention to an inclusive faith-based community and society."

Landrieu notes the SBC's 1978 resolution against racism and its 1995 resolution apologizing for slavery as well as Luter's role in resurrecting Franklin Avenue Baptist Church from the destruction of 2005's Hurricane Katrina.

The June 29 resolution was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary and does not require the approval of the House of Representatives. (BP)



LUTER

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About Alabama

A Tough Choice

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

On Sept. 18, Alabama voters will decide in a special election whether to approve a constitutional amendment proposed by the Legislature in May. It will not be an easy decision to make.

In the first place, you may ask why we are voting on this proposal in September when a regularly scheduled election will occur in November. Why not save the expense?

Balance the budget

The reason is that this proposal would provide money to balance the state's general fund budget for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1. Without voter approval of the new money, that budget will be out of balance by \$145 million. Since the law requires a balanced budget, significant cuts or new revenue would be required.

Why didn't the Legislature balance the budget itself? In May, lawmakers approved a general fund budget of \$1.7 billion for the coming year, down by about 4 percent from the year before. They did not believe that Medicaid and the state prison system, which together account for 58 percent of the budget, could be cut further and could not find sufficient cuts in other places. Although lawmakers did raise fees, they were unwilling to raise taxes. Thus spending exceeded the revenue available.

The Legislature has proposed in this constitutional amendment to take \$145 million a year for the next three years from the Alabama Trust Fund. This is our state savings account that captures revenue from oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico and uses it to fund public recreational land, capital improvements and rainy day accounts for state budgets in hard times; ironically, it also gives money to the general fund each year. The fund has a current market value of about \$2.5 billion; this proposal would reduce its value by about 17 percent. There will be no repayment. If the amendment is defeated, the budget will have to be balanced another way.

The original purpose of this amendment, which remains in the proposal, was to improve the way money is expended from the Alabama Trust Fund. A consulting report has shown that the current spending rules will deplete the fund over time. According to the consulting firm, the new rules contained in the proposal will, in conjunction with changes in investment policy, create a better chance of maintaining the value of the fund for the future. Clearly this is worth voters' consideration.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Contact Williams at jwillia@samford.edu.

Boyers prays for opportunities to share Christ in London

(continued from page 1)
Alliance. "The fruitfulness of his ministry over the past 21 years is a testimony to God's faithfulness and John's persevering spirit. His considerable experience will be a great asset to the chaplaincy at the London Olympic Games."

During the Olympics and Paralympics, Boyers will manage the deployment of 160 chaplains from the five major world religions — Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism — into the athletes' village.

Boyers and other Christian chaplains will hold optional services and lead Bible studies for athletes and others working in the village, as well as be avail-

able to talk or pray with anyone who requests it.

It's the same deal as it is at Old Trafford — proselytizing is prohibited in Olympic areas. "But when people ask questions, we have every right to respond," Boyers said.

So he keeps praying that same prayer — that God will prompt questions that allow him to tell how Jesus Christ changes lives. And whether those opportunities come or not, he said he'll serve with love and compassion.

For more information about chaplaincy work in the UK, visit sportschaplaincy.org.uk. For more information about ministry efforts surrounding the Olympics, visit morethangold.org.uk.



Photo courtesy of Tim Andrews

SHOWING CHRIST'S LOVE — Students from FBC Valley minister through a kids camp and basketball camp for children during a missions trip to Tuscaloosa.

Meeting needs

FBC Valley students do hands-on ministry in Tuscaloosa

Kevin Scarbrough, 17, a member of First Baptist Church, Valley, in East Liberty Baptist Association and 38 other church members participated in a missions trip to Tuscaloosa to show the love of Christ while serving in missions opportunities June 17–23.

"It was really fun — we got a lot done and were really productive," Scarbrough said about his first missions trip experience.

First, Valley, and Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, jointly organized a kids camp and basketball camp for children from Forest Lake Baptist. The camp was held at McKinney Park at the beginning of each day.

Despite the roasting temperatures, after the camp students rolled

up their sleeves for construction work on two local homes — one affected by the April 27, 2011 tornadoes — through Compassion Coalition of Tuscaloosa County.

The day concluded with Vacation Bible School for Forest Lake during the evenings.

Throughout the week, the group was hosted by Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

"This is our first year to help in Tuscaloosa," said Tim Andrews, associate pastor of family ministries and interim senior pastor for First, Valley. "We just ended our four-year partnership with a church in New Orleans after helping them with their needs following Hurricane Katrina."

As the partnership ended, Andrews began to look to create an-

other missions opportunity and found his church could assist Forest Lake affected by the April 2011 tornadoes.

"We had a great trip and had opportunities to show the love of Christ through hands-on ministries and to share the love of Christ through witnessing to those we crossed paths with during the week," he said. "One of the encouraging things to me was seeing students lead Bible study devotions and share their faith during the week."

Scarbrough was among the students who led devotions to camp participants.

"I enjoyed sharing with the students at the camp, and I would love to continue to do missions trips in the future," he said.

(Brittney Knox, TAB intern)



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Beeson to host Pastors School:** Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham will host its 25th annual Beeson Pastors School July 23–26.

Speakers include Steve Brown, professor of preaching at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Fla.; Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George; Beeson Divinity School professor of preaching Robert Smith Jr.; and William Willimon, bishop of The United Methodist Church.

For registration information call 1-800-888-8266 or 205-726-2731 or visit www.beesondivinity.com.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Christian Leadership College Organized:** The University of Mobile has established the new College of Christian Leadership (CCL) to oversee the new School of Worship Leadership, School of Christian Ministries and Center for Performing Arts/School of Music.

For more information about CCL, visit www.umobile.edu or call 251-442-2222.

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► **Judson Begins First Clinical Rotations:** Judson College's first nursing class began clinical rotations this summer after a spring semester in Judson's state-of-the-art classroom facilities and skills lab.

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Now is perfect time to serve God

Years ago my mother told me about one of her first memories of church.

She came from an alcoholic home. At times her mother was active in church but her father wasn't. She remembered attending church with her four brothers and sisters, often in clothes that were old. Her family did not have much money.

She remembered attending her Sunday School class each Sunday and meeting her teacher.

She confessed that she did not remember the woman's face, nor did she remember her name.

What she did remember, however, was that each Sunday this woman would lead her to the rocking chair in the corner.

There she would climb up in the woman's lap and they would rock together.

With each rock, the woman whispered in her ear, "God loves you. God loves you."

My mother said that not only was this one of her first memories of church but it was also one of her

A Thought for Women

By Jean Roberson
jroberson@wmu.org



first memories of learning about God.

You see, in those moments that woman was not simply using the words of God's love. She was also demonstrating that love by being present each Sunday and by holding a little girl on her lap — teaching and demonstrating the basic truth that God is love.

I have wondered about that woman for years. Surely she didn't know all the people she was impacting.

In those moments when she would hold the little girl, she was laying a foundation that would be integral to my mother's faith, a faith that would eventually be passed

down to me and to my children.

So what do we do with this testimony? Do we look at it, affirm the woman and smile at the way God moves through the small acts of kindness? Absolutely.

We also need to remind ourselves that none of this would have happened if the woman had not made herself available to be used.

It is so easy to pass up opportunities to make ourselves available to God and to others.

Young mothers are overwhelmed by the constant demands of young children.

Middle-aged women are busy with work and caring for aging parents. Some older women might struggle with health issues and thus think their season of service has passed.

Life is filled with situations and

circumstances. Life is filled with obligations and responsibilities. Those never leave us, and if we wait for a season in life when we think we will have more time and fewer demands we will never be available to say the kind word, to make the dinner, to serve on the committee or to hold the little girl in our lap.

A Takeaway Value . . .

Our time to be of service to God is now.

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

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Pastor Rick Marshall
Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery

We live in an age of de-personalization. We are a credit card to the gas station, an account holder to the bank and a charge account holder to the department store. The improvements of technology don't answer our longing for meaning and peace.

It has been said the elevator is a picture of our world today. You get crammed in with people you have never met, try hard not to touch them and few ever speak to one another except to name a floor.

As bad as it is, the prospect of feeling like a whole person for many is even more dismal when it comes to faith. If people are not easy to build relationships with, what chance do we have with God?

The truth is, if it were up to us it would be impossible. Alone we can't build a bridge that far. But the message of the gospel is that God has come to us.

The Psalmist said it well: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You understand my thoughts from afar" (Ps. 139:1-2). God knows us best and cares for us the most. That's just the opposite of the world.

With God there is no pretense or need to impress. Among the best-known verses in the Bible is John 3:16. It begins with "For God so loved . . ."

The life and ministry of Jesus bear out the love of God for every person. He cared, listened, served, supported, encouraged and affirmed. He touched as well as stayed in touch with people. God wants to do the same for each of us. Our failures were already anticipated and forgiveness offered when He sent His Son to the cross.

If you want to know God, consider how much He already loves you. Find a quiet place and reflect on the verses from Psalms and John. You will discover that God wanted the relationship with you long before you knew how much you needed one with Him.

Not only does God know you, He wants to show you a community of faith, a local church family with a personal touch rather than leave you as an island in a sea of indifference.

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

Bob Franklin

Former Montgomery Association DOM dies

Robert Lee "Bob" Franklin Jr., former director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, died July 8. He was 78.

A native of Center Point, Franklin graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

He served as minister of education for Highland Baptist Church, Florence; Woodlawn Baptist Church, Birmingham; Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham; and First Baptist Church, Huntsville.

He then served Judson College in Marion from 1971–1977 in development, recruitment and church relations roles.

From 1977–1985, Franklin served as the director of missions for Montgomery Association. During his service at the association, Sunday School enrollment increased 149 percent.

He then served as director of missions for Noonday Baptist Association in Marietta, Ga.

In 1997 he began serving as director of associational strategy for Southern Baptist associations at the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

He retired from NAMB in 2002 and served as director of missions for Macon Baptist Association in Macon, Ga., until 2011.

Franklin started more than 50 churches during his ministry as a director of missions and led many missions trips.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Louise; three sons; and 11 grandchildren.

George Jerrell Blakney

Fayette's Concord Baptist interim pastor dies

George Jerrell Blakney, interim pastor of Concord Baptist Church, Fayette, died June 3. He was 73.

A Carrollton native, Blakney received a bachelor's degree from Immanuel Bible College and Theological Seminary in Sharpsburg, Ga., and was a veteran of the United States Air Force. During his 35 years of ministry he served as pastor of Kennedy Baptist Church in Lamar Baptist Association; Canaan Baptist Church, Columbus, Miss.; and Hamilton Baptist Church, Hamilton, Miss.

After retiring in 2008, he served in the pastorate as needed in Pickens, Tuscaloosa, Lamar and Fayette counties.

Blakney is survived by his wife of 53 years, Dot; two children; and four grandchildren.

James Nelson

Former Marshall Association DOM dies

James Nelson, former director of missions (DOM) for Marshall Baptist Association, died July 4. He was 88.

Nelson was a World War II veteran and served as a pastor/church starter during college and seminary.

He was a church planter and pastor in Alabama and a missionary in Montana, New Mexico and the Panama Canal Zone. He also served on staff of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico and the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board).

Nelson served as DOM for Marshall Association from 1983 to 1985.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Annis; and six children and their families.

Samford's Special Collection Department honored for outstanding achievement

The Special Collection Department of Samford University's Harwell G. Davis Library has received the Davis C. Woolley Award for Outstanding Achievement in Assessing and Preserving Baptist History from the Baptist History and Heritage Society.

Elizabeth C. Wells, chairwoman of the Special Collection Department, accepted the award at the annual Baptist History and Heritage Society meeting in Raleigh, N.C., in June.

The award is named for the former executive secretary-treasurer of the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. It encourages creativity and excellence in state Baptist history programs, including all organizations involved in assessing and preserving Baptist history.

Woolley, a 1930 Samford graduate, led the Historical Commission from 1959 until 1971.

Prior to that, he was director of Samford's Extension Division for Christian Training for six years.



Photo by Caroline Summers

DEDICATED — Elizabeth C. Wells, chairwoman of the Special Collection Department of Samford University's library, recently accepted the Davis C. Woolley Award in Raleigh, N.C., on behalf of the department.

"How wonderful it was that the special collection received the award named for Davis C. Woolley, who left Samford to become the director of the Historical Commission," Wells said.

"I was privileged to accept the

award on behalf of the collection and the Library."

The special collection serves as the historical repository for the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Its holdings include church records, association records, oral histories, copies of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper, manuscript collections and papers of Alabama Baptist leaders.

The special collection also includes strong holdings in Alabama history and Samford history, other newspaper collections and genealogical holdings including a collection of Irish genealogy. It also includes literary collections of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, John Ruskin, John Massfield and Lafcadio Hearn, as well as other collections.

Wells has been a member of the library staff for 36 years and has served as head of the special collection since 1980.

She holds a bachelor of arts in history from Judson College in Marion, a master's in history from Auburn University and a master's in library science from the University of Alabama. (SU)



By Christine Kapurch
Correspondent, TAB

Someone You Should Know

MARGARET THORNTON

River Road Baptist Church, Alexander City
Tallapoosa Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"

HOBBIES: Sewing, yard work and helping the elderly

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 17 years of marriage to Hardey; four children, Pam, Debra, Susie and Jason; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren

Margaret Thornton has held several roles throughout her 46 years at River Road Baptist Church. She has served as the music director for the past four years and the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) director for 15 years. She also teaches an adult Sunday School class and is the acting Vacation Bible School director.

Q: What led you to serve your church's WMU?

A: I love people and I just love to work in the church.

Q: Why have you continued through the years?

A: I just love the Lord and I want to do it as long as the Lord lets me.

Q: What does ministry work demand?

A: To me it demands commitment, and you should do the best you can with it.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: Such joy, I can't describe it. I love the Lord and (love) being around people.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: They really support me very

much. My son-in-law is a deacon and two of my children attend the same church.

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

A: I see myself going as long as I can. I visit nursing homes now and I hope to continue to do that. I sit with the elderly and just visit with them.

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

A: It makes all the difference in the world. If you aren't involved it doesn't seem like life is going on. ☺

Shattering darkness

FBC Montgomery adopts Ejamat people in Senegal, Africa

By Debby Faught
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Clapping and cheering erupt from the crowd gathered as an elderly woman with gray hair emerges from the muddy waters of the Casamance River, displaying to the Ejamat people her new identity as a believer in Jesus Christ. "I am old, but I too will follow Jesus," she said.

First Baptist Church, Montgomery, has "embraced the Ejamat people in Senegal, Africa, and are committed to be the missionaries to them," said Brian Gay, the church's minister of missions.

A total of "19 precious people turned their backs on centuries of dark animism to boldly proclaim their faith in Christ," said Senior Pastor Jay Wolf.

"When [they] stood publicly and unashamedly to declare they were following the 'Jesus Way,' our hearts flooded

with joy and heaven must have erupted with fireworks. Each new Christ-follower shared their testimony. It was electrifying to see Christ's Kingdom expanding and the darkness shattering by God's liberating love and light."

Members of First, Montgomery, have taken two trips since their initial prayer meeting in February 2011.

"We felt God leading us to embrace the Ejamat people group," remarked Gay, noting First, Montgomery, partners with Southern Baptist representatives in the Senegal area and has embraced the Ejamat group through the International Mission Board's Unengaged, Unreached People Groups emphasis. "We plan to send teams as often as we can, every six to eight weeks. [With God's help, we want to] multiply churches where they can continue to grow through oral chronological Bible stories, and slowly but surely we can aid them in reaching out into their community as we move on to more unreached, unengaged people groups."

However, members of First, Montgomery, were not the first to start praying for the Ejamat people. Karfar became a believer in a neighboring village prior to the arrival of the

Alabama Baptists working



Photo courtesy of FBC Montgomery

Brian Gay (left), minister of missions at FBC Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association shares a Bible story with a few Ejamat men in Senegal, Africa.

First, Montgomery, teams; he then moved back home and prayed fervently for 15 years for his people group. Gay described him as a modern-day Andrew. "He is a main leader among the Ejamats and opens up his home for Bible studies."

When asked how Alabama Baptist churches could pray for this mission Gay simply responded, "Pray for the Ejamat people."

He also encouraged all churches to engage an unengaged people group. According to Operation World, there are 57 people groups in Senegal and 47 percent of them remain unreached.

"Prayer is our strategy. [If you] cannot go, pray," Gay said. Out of about 3,000 Ejamat people, 35 have received Christ and 21 have been baptized. 🙏

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

to reach unengaged, unreached people groups targeted by IMB

FBC Cullman adopts Northern Conchucos Quechua people in Peru

By Maggie Walsh
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

When International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff challenged churches to adopt an unreached and unengaged people group at the 2011 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, First Baptist Church, Cullman, took the message to heart.

Since that time, Pastor Edwin Hayes has been urging the First, Cullman, congrega-

tion to pray about which of the 3,500 people groups to adopt. Its decision to adopt the Northern Conchucos Quechua people in the Yanama Valley of Ancash, Peru, is a direct result of that prayer.

Members of First, Cullman, voted unanimously to adopt this group in a church conference June 24. The church also reached out to First Baptist Church, Athens, and Crosshaven Baptist Church, Hanceville, to partner in this ministry.

Crosshaven Baptist's congregation has approved the adoption and partnership. First, Athens, will bring the pending partnership before its congregation in August. Edwin Jenkins, pastor of First, Athens, said the church is "definitely planning on lending a hand and giving support," but that it was too early to de-

termine the depth of its involvement.

"It's just thrilling," said Jim O'Dillon, minister of education and outreach at First, Cullman, on adopting the Northern Conchucos Quechua people group. "God has opened our eyes. Our people have seen the need."

On its own, First, Cullman, could not adopt a people group, O'Dillon said. By partnering together, the West Cullman Baptist Association churches will be able to make this ministry to one of the poorest areas in Peru tangible.

Crosshaven Baptist Pastor Jason Murphree said the partnership was a "natural fit" since he and his brother, Josh, have connections to both churches. First, Cullman, is the men's home church and Josh Murphree was a staff intern at First, Athens, before becoming a Southern Baptist representative in Peru.

Jason Murphree said Crosshaven's decision to adopt a people group was simultaneous with Elliff's challenge. The church, which was formed in 2004, determined it was time to stop focusing inward and start reaching outward. Crosshaven has sent many teams to Peru in past years because of its change in focus.

In addition to adopting this people group, O'Dillon said First, Cullman, will have one of its own, Taylor Novara, serving in the Yanama Valley as a journeyman with IMB in this area for two years after he completes eight months of training and language school.

Novara was a member of the vision team sent to Peru on April 27 to May 6 to "get a sense of God's purpose" for the ministry, said Phillip McAfee, deacon and chairman of the missions committee at First, Cullman. McAfee, Brian Witcher and Lee Underwood, all of First, Cullman, were also



Photo courtesy of FBC Cullman

FBC deacon Lee Underwood makes balloon animals for children in the Yanama.

members of the vision team. Witcher is the minister of music and Underwood is a deacon.

The trip was educational, McAfee said, but he noted it was also difficult because of Yanama Valley's altitude of 13,000 feet. Despite the rough conditions, the team was able to travel across the valley and see the natives' needs.

"We felt an immediate connection with the people in that area," McAfee said. "I felt a great desire to minister to them and lead them to the Lord."

Less than 2 percent of the Yanama Valley population — estimated to be about 60,000 to 100,000 people — are Christians.

McAfee said the team was well received despite their status as outsiders. "We found everyone to be friendly and hospitable," he said. "It's hard not to fall in love with them."

The network of churches plans to send a team to Peru every six to eight weeks once the paperwork and training have been completed, O'Dillon said. When asked about funding this ministry, O'Dillon recited the old hymn "Trust and Obey."

"God will provide the funding," he said.

"I don't need to worry — He's taking care of it." ❧

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RISK

Judges 6:11–16; 7:9–11, 13–15

Gideon was a judge with a mission from God, but his simple life as a dutiful son gave no indication of the greatness he would achieve or the notoriety he would gain. From his humble beginnings, Gideon had little expectation to do anything or to be anyone significant.

Too often, Christians are quick to judge Gideon as a man with limited faith. They look at him as someone who tried to weasel out of obeying God. In fact, he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32) who sought to confirm God's will. Gideon wanted to make sure that he was discerning God's direction, as he lives in the midst of spiritual syncretism.

What is God's will? If we ask that question, then we risk being held accountable. Instead we tell God our plans, and then we ask Him to bless us. Choosing to pursue a self-centered life is a far greater risk than discovering and accomplishing the expressed will of God. Accepting responsibilities ordained by God and serving faithfully accomplishes God's purposes.

Shift Your Focus (6:11–16)

A self-preserving mentality leads to a limited perspective. Since the Midianites were oppressing Israel, Gideon was threshing his wheat in a winepress, a small, enclosed area where he could hide if need be. The angel of God appeared to Gideon calling him a mighty man, and Gideon's response was to ask why God was not caring for His people. When the angel explained Gideon's role, this soon-to-be deliverer showed great humility (or fear, see 6:27), realizing that he had little to offer God or His people.

Followers of Christ are often reluctant to take on new assignments from God. If we fear embarrassment, rejection or suffering will be the result of fulfilling the task, we would rather not do it. Rather than focusing on the greatness of God, we see our own limited potential, our weakness and our lack of experience.

After demonstration of God's power,

Gideon accomplished his first task, the destruction of his clan's Baal and Asherah idols. His father called him Jerubbaal ("let Baal contend") after this event, arguing that if Baal is real, then he can cast judgment on Gideon. He was on his way to become the mighty man of valor.

Accept God's Encouragement (7:9–11)

Encouragement from God leads to courage in the face of personal fear. Gideon prepares to attack the Midianites in obedience to God's commission, and his actions demonstrate fear. God told him that if he was afraid, he should first go with his servant to scout the Midianite camp. In the midst of his fear, Gideon took his servant Purah to the camp outposts and listened to Midianite conversations amongst their soldiers.

Acting in the face of fear seems counter-intuitive. We may be convinced that something is missing — that we are unprepared for the challenges before us. As we step out in obedience, we see that God is well aware of our circumstances, including our fear. In fact, He knows more about our situations than we do.

Acknowledge God's Grace (7:13–15)

Gideon was motivated to act as a result of God's grace. This man sought affirmation of God's direction with every new instruction, and God graciously confirmed His will. Midianite soldiers were discussing a dream, when one of the men discerned that its meaning was Israel's victory and the defeat of his own military. Hearing this explanation from the mouth of the enemy was ample motivation for Gideon to mobilize the army.

God's grace is sufficient for our needs. As Christians we seek to know and do the will of God (Rom. 12:2). We feel at times that our struggles are more than we can bear, yet we are reminded that Christ is our sufficiency. Let us take to heart the words Jesus spoke to the apostle Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh

Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

WISE

1 Corinthians 2:1-15

Information is one of the key words of today. We are overwhelmed with demands for information and we want it immediately. Yet information is one thing — knowledge, understanding and wisdom are another.

Human Wisdom (1–8)

Paul is in no way opposed to human knowledge. If we believe that all truth is God's truth, then there is no aspect of human knowledge that cannot benefit human beings.

However, Paul distinguishes between a dependence upon human knowledge and the manipulation of human wisdom with what he considers the foundation of true wisdom — Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Although Paul may be using hyperbole to make his point, it is clear that he considered the preaching of the crucified and risen Jesus as the central truth of Christianity, the foundation of the life of Christian community. In a church which was often divided over the quality of its leaders with individual groups saying, “I am of Paul ... I am of Cephas ... I am of Apollos” Paul believed the common ground of their fellowship was not human eloquence or wisdom but the cross which brought them all to the same level of sinners saved by grace.

Paul was quite willing to admit that in terms of human wisdom he often came across as a not very gifted speaker. He was not diffident about admitting his insecurity and inadequacy. He knew the important thing about preaching the gospel was not primarily the eloquence of the preacher but rather the focus of the message — pointing toward Jesus as the only hope of salvation. This is the way of wisdom that the world rejected and yet, in nailing our Lord to the cross, in a paradoxical way, fulfilled the purposes of God.

God's Wisdom (9–11)

Paul stresses the fact that the wisdom of God is beyond our human comprehension. Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit we

will never fathom the mind of God or discern the depth of His love toward us.

Paul specifically refers to the wonderful nature of our Christian hope and tells us that our most wonderful conception of what God has prepared for His people will always fall short of what actually awaits us. This reminds us of two important truths. First of all as Christians we walk by faith and not by sight. We live not on the basis of what we can see or hear but on the foundation of faith that believes the promises of God and lives in the present in the light of the glory that is to come. Secondly we must ask God for more and more insight into His loving purposes for us here and now as well as for the future.

Discerning the Difference (12–16)

Paul distinguishes between two types of Christians in these verses — those who are influenced by the standards of the world and those who are led and guided by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells all Christians, but not all of us live our lives guided by His principles and open to His direction. Sadly there are many Christians in the modern church who are Spirit-poor.

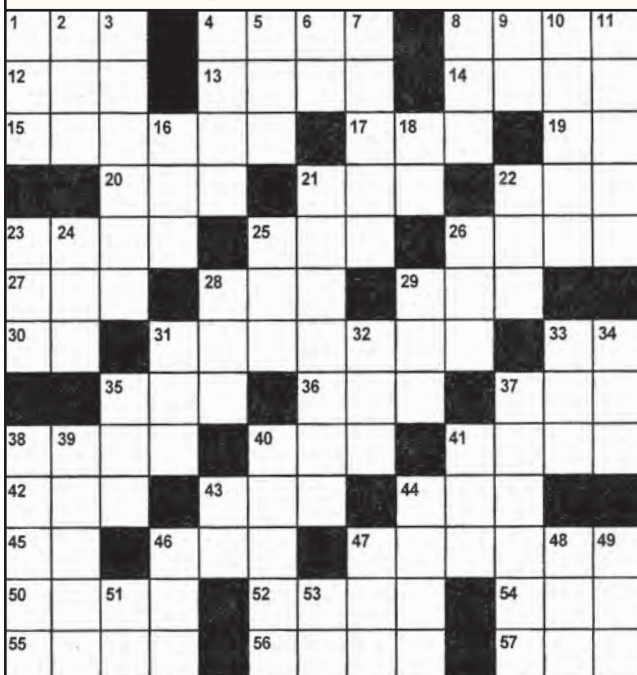
A.W. Tozer put it this way: "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

Paul and the early church were Spirit-rich. They emphasized the need to allow God's gift of the Spirit to work within our hearts, to become the One who leads, guides and empowers our lives both individually and corporately. Thus we pray the words of this song:

Spirit of the living God
Fall afresh on me
Spirit of the living God
Fall afresh on me
Fill me anew
Fill me anew
Spirit of the Lord
Fall afresh on me

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Look ____ new heavens and a new earth. (2 Pet. 3:13)
4. I will ____ thee: on the third day. (2 Kings 20:5)
8. Health resorts.
12. My days ____ like a shadow. (Ps. 102:11)
13. Enter ____ his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
14. We have seen his star in the _____. (Matt. 2:2)
15. I will destroy this _____. (Mark 14:58)
17. ____ no man any thing. (Rom. 13:8)
19. A greeting.
20. To hurt.
21. We ____ great plainness of speech. (2 Cor. 3:12)
22. He ____ to meet them. (Gen. 18:2)
23. A narrow cut.
25. Voice of ____ crying in the wilderness. (Matt. 3:3)
26. With ____ life will I satisfy him. (Ps. 91:16)
27. An ____ of oil for an ephah. (Ezek. 45:24)
28. I saw thee under the ____ tree. (John 1:50)
29. Arise, take up thy _____. (Matt. 9:6)
30. What think ____ of Christ? (Matt. 22:42)
31. We were ____ of God to be put in trust. (1 Thes. 2:4)
33. Chemical symbol for radium.
35. Hear my ____, O God.

- (Ps. 61:1)
36. Thou shalt ____ about thee.
(Job 11:18)
37. Babylon is taken, ____ is
confounded. (Jer. 50:2)
38. O Lord, ____ shall I say!
(Josh. 7:8)
40. Height (abbr.).
41. He moveth his ____ like a cedar.
(Job 40:17)
42. Even as a ____ gathereth her
chickens. (Matt. 23:37)
43. Not willing that ____ should
perish. (2 Pet. 3:9)
44. I would thou wert cold or ____.
(Rev. 3:15)
45. A piece (abbr.).
46. Wheat bristle.
47. ____ and built up in him.
(Col. 2:7)
50. The high places also of ____.
(Hosea 10:8)
52. The children of ____ of
Hezekiah. (Ezra 2:16)
54. ____ up for thyself treasures
in heaven. (Matt. 6:20)
55. An examination.
56. Gadaiel the son of ____
(Num. 13:10)
57. How long will it be ____ thou be
quiet? (Jer. 47:6)
- Down**
1. Liberal soul shall be made ____.
(Prov. 11:25)
2. Raw metal.
3. My joy might ____ in you.
(John 15:11)
4. Every mountain and ____ shall
be brought low. (Luke 3:5)
5. Compass point.
6. Marvel not ____ this.
(John 5:28)
7. ____ thy shoe from off thy foot.
(Josh 5:15)
8. Whereas I was blind, now I
____. (John 9:25)
9. Dad.
10. Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and
____. (Josh 19:7)
11. O death, where is thy ____?
(1 Cor. 15:55)
16. Brought me up also out of a
horrible _____. (Ps. 40:2)
18. ____ are the children of God.
(Rom. 8:16)
21. Christ died for the ____.
(Rom. 5:6)
22. Moses took the ____ of God in
his hand. (Ex. 4:20)
23. Timid.
24. I will ____ with my fathers.
(Gen. 47:30)
25. A horn of ____.
(1 Kings 1:39)
26. The Lord ____ me.
(Gen. 24:27)
28. For then would I ____ away.
(Ps. 55:6)
29. Therefore shall he ____ in
harvest. (Prov. 20:4)
31. Thou ____ the Son of God.
(John 1:49)
32. Powers of thinking.
33. Shimei and ____, and the
mighty men. (1 Kings 1:8)
34. The Lord is good to ____.
(Ps. 145:9)
35. How ____ these things be?

- (John 3:9)
37. The Lord mighty in ____.
(Ps. 24:8)
38. Sowed tares among the ____.
(Matt. 13:25)
39. The first of your dough for an
____ offering. (Num. 15:20)
40. And led him away to ____ first.
(John 18:13)
41. Ye take ____ much upon you.
(Num. 16:3)
43. A sound of sympathy.
44. The sons of Lotan; ____, and
Homam. (1 Chron. 1:39)
46. Go to the ____, thou sluggard.
(Prov. 6:6)
47. The Lord dried up the water of
the ____ sea. (Josh 2:10)
48. Give ____ to my words. (Ps. 5:1)
49. A solution for coloring.
51. Suffix used in forming
plurals.
53. Peace ____ him that is far off.
(Isa. 57:19)



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Wonderful Life
Paths Music

Jeremiah 6:16 says, "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls ... " Hope-fully you have known the rest that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and can identify with this word. The Old Paths Quartet has set a course "in the way" and is convinced it is a "good way" to a "wonderful life."



Manager Doug Roark, along with Tim Rackley, Jeremy Peace and brand-new bass singer Daniel Ashmore, is taking an "old path" that most quartets do not care to travel. You won't find this quartet headlining many of the big all-night singings and concert halls around the country. Roark and the guys focus the majority of their efforts on the Church, and from what they report, it is paying off. The same can be said for their records. Their records are filled with straight-up southern gospel songs with very few frills

or recording tricks. The formula is very much in line with Old Paths Quartet's direction. If you ask them, they will tell you that the Lord is blessing them with a "wonderful life." (Borden)

PASSION

White Flag
sixsteprecords

"Passion: White Flag," recorded live earlier this year at Passion 2012 at the Georgia Dome, features artists Chris Tomlin, David Crowder Band, Charlie Hall, Matt Redman, Christy Nockels, Kristian Stanfill, Hillsong United and Lecrae. It's similar to other Passion recordings with excellent performances and impeccable recording, putting the listener right in the middle of things.

"White Flag" is setting records for sales and radio play, opening at No. 5 on the Billboard Top 200 and flying to the No. 4 spot on iTunes Top Albums Overall Chart as soon as it was released. The title track, performed by Chris Tomlin, was the most added track at Christian Adult Contemporary (AC) radio



in its debut week. The entire record is outstanding. Stanfill starts things off with a kicking version of "I Am Not Ashamed," followed by Tomlin on the title track. David Crowder Band and Charlie Hall add their special gifts to the evening. Nockels' three songs are jewels, her voice one of the most touching instruments I've ever heard. Redman's "10,000 Reasons" is a beautifully written, moving worship ballad, dropping his listeners to their knees while lifting their souls toward our Father. Tomlin finishes things up with the anthemic "No Turning Back."

Great performances have always been a hallmark of the Passion recordings. This is the best yet. (Sharp)

JASON CRABB

The Song Lives On
Gaither Music Group

There was an era in southern gospel music when the live record was a golden standard. Now Jason Crabb and his stellar band have stepped from behind the cloak of studio "magic" without the aid of auto-tune and have shown that, "sho-nuff," singers and musicians are still alive and well.

Crabb, along with his friend and co-producer Bill Gaither, gathered

songs that are cemented in the foundation of gospel music.

"The Song Lives On" begins with a collection of hymns, spirituals and standards before settling in for a spell on "Jesus on the Mainline." Lorie Sikes shows not only her standing as one of the best bass guitar players in gospel music but also her skill with background vocals (BGVs) throughout the record — you know somewhere that Ginger Pitchers and Candy Pfeifer are smiling because of Sikes' talent. Sikes and Blaine are joined by BGV all-star artists Reggie and Ladye



Love Smith and the queen of BGVs, Angela Primm.

Over the course of the night, many of Crabb's friends showed up — and showed out! The Isaacs joined Crabb on the Florida Boys' classic "When He Was on the Cross (I Was on His Mind)." The Crabb Family came out on the hit "Through the Fire." (By the way, I encourage all drummers to check out the 3:43 mark on "Through the Fire," where Michael Shade Rowsey took the opportunity to bring the drum kit into absolute submission.) "Why Me" features Crabb and legendary guests William Lee Golden and Bill Gaither. There really is too much to tell about this live record. You are just going to have to hear it for yourself. (Borden)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Tis Grace Thus Far: The Amazing Grace Story of Bobby Britt

Bobby Britt. Birmingham: The Bobby Britt Evangelistic Association, 2011. 242 pp. (Paperback).

Alabama Baptists will certainly recognize the author and subject of "Tis Grace Thus Far," evangelist Bobby Britt.

In it, Britt chronicles his life from a young child, sharing details from his often difficult childhood that included losing his father at a young age, through his years as an evangelist and pastor.

Britt's life has been full of contrasts, from years of successful preaching — more than 800 revivals — to what fellow evangelist Junior Hill described in the book's Foreword as "valleys of despair ... trials and tribulations." In sharing his story, Britt seems to have included it all, even the events that he recalled with "shame and regret."

While many autobiographies appear to have been written to show how gifted and successful the subject is, this book has an honesty and transparency about it that inspire

the reader. As Hill wrote, it is "good news for those who find themselves in bad times."

I Can't Even Walk (Without You Holding My Hand)

Justin Fisher. Moody: Justin Fisher, 2011. 181 pp. (Paperback).

Author Justin Fisher was born with cerebral palsy (CP), a condition that has kept him in a wheelchair all of his life. What defines his life, though, is not the CP — it's his relationship with God. Fisher says, "I was gloriously saved at the age of 14, and it is the results of this life lived at the intersection of CP and [the] cross that are documented" in the book.

"I Can't Even Walk" is a collection of stories Fisher has compiled from his life; many are funny, some are poignant, all are engaging and well-crafted and all are cinched up at the end with a spiritual truth. Entertaining stories written by a talented author with a solid sense of humor — what's not to like about this book?

Fisher and his family live in

Moody and are members of Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham.

The House of Esther

Lura Zerick. Durham, Conn.: Strategic Book Group, 2011. 161 pp. (Paperback).

Noelle was a young, recent college graduate who met, fell in love with and married Joe — all in a short time. Soon after the wedding, Joe began to change. The kind and attentive man Noelle had married was becoming controlling, cutting her off from family and friends. Finally, in a fit of rage, Joe caused Noelle to lose her baby by kicking her in the stomach. Noelle knew she had to get away.

This short novel grew out of the author's own experiences with an abusive relationship. While the story is realistic and well-told the author seems to have gone out of her way to sanitize the story by taking out much of the conflict and strong emotions that must accompany a situation such as this.

The result is a bland and tepid story that could easily, given the author's skill, have been a riveting one.

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. **The Harbinger**, Jonathan Cahn (Charisma Media)
2. **Loving, Bailey Flanigan Series #4**, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
3. **The Fiddler, Home to Hickory Hollow Series #1**, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
4. **The Touch**, Randall Wallace (Tyndale)
5. **The Betrayal, Precinct 11 Series #2**, Jerry B. Jenkins (Tyndale)
6. **Illusion**, Frank Peretti (Howard Books)
7. **Dry as Rain**, Gina Holmes (Tyndale)
8. **The First Gardener**, Denise Hildreth (Tyndale)
9. **Forsaking All Others, Sister Wife Series #2**, Allison Pittman (Tyndale)
10. **Half-Stitched Amish Quilting Club**, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)

Nonfiction

1. **Jesus Calling**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Be a Better Dad Today**, Gregory Slayton (Gospel Light)
3. **Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. **Heaven Is for Real**, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition**, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. **My Utmost for His Highest**, Oswald Chambers (Barbour)
7. **Not a Fan**, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)
8. **The Circle Maker**, Mark Batterson (Zondervan)
9. **Crazy Love**, Francis Chan (David C Cook)
10. **One Thousand Gifts**, Ann Voskamp (Zondervan)

'The Mayor'

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Huntsville Stars' Morris lives for Christ on, off field

For the Huntsville Stars, 'The Mayor' takes care of business from his office at first base.

Hunter Morris, the Stars' all-star first baseman, got the nickname at the beginning of the 2012 campaign.

"It's stuck now for well over half the season," Morris said. "That one will stick for the rest of this year."

Morris is doing what few have an opportunity to do: play professional baseball in his hometown.

Instead of five or six months, he gets around-the-calendar time with his wife, Macie; 20-month-old son, Tripp; his parents and his in-laws.

"I'm getting to do things a lot of fathers and husbands in baseball don't get to do. It's routine for me to be able to go home and see my wife and son and tuck him into bed the way I would during the offseason. I am so blessed. It's certainly a God thing," Morris said.

Morris has taken full advantage of being the cleanup batter in the Stars' lineup. Through July 4 Morris was the fourth leading hitter in the Southern League and Huntsville's leader with a .303 batting average. He also led the league with 27 doubles. He played in the Southern League All-Star game in June.

Brewers' best power-hitting prospect

One reason the Milwaukee Brewers drafted Morris (6'4", 213 pounds) in the fourth round of the 2010 Major League Baseball Draft was for his hitting. The Brewers' 10th-ranked prospect has been tagged as their best power-hitting prospect.

Morris could have played for the Boston Red Sox straight out of high school. After being Huntsville's City Player of the Year four times at Grissom High School, named 6-A All-State and an All-American, he was drafted by Boston in 2007.

However, Morris traded cash for college and signed with Auburn University. He was Southeastern Conference (SEC) Freshman of the Year in 2008, a freshman All-American and played for Team USA that summer in the World University Championship. He was SEC Player of the Year in 2010 and his .386 batting average helped land him as a Baseball America first team All-American. He set school records for home runs (23) and runs batted in (76).

"You always know the guys who come in. Guys who are already there check up on the new recruits," said Montgomery Biscuits pitcher Scott Shuman, who played with Morris for two years at Auburn. "We heard we got this second-rounder who turned down a good bit of money to come play at Auburn. After the first couple of days at practice, we're thinking, 'Yeah, this guy is the real deal.'"

Morris' life changed in two dramatic ways at Auburn: he made a renewed commitment to Christ and he met Macie West. Macie played softball and her brother, Kris, who was Morris' teammate, introduced them.

Had he signed with the Red Sox he doesn't think he would have met Macie. "I am thankful every day for the decisions that I have made that have led me to where I am now."

During his sophomore year Morris made a decision to start living for Christ. He called it a turning point.

"I had strayed away from Him more than I had



Photo by Jill Cacic/Huntsville Stars

Hunter Morris

wanted the couple of years prior. The temptations were there: going out, drinking, partying, all that stuff," he said.

He became active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and became close to chaplain Whit Smith, who later officiated his wedding. Morris' recommitment to Christ reinforced the relationship with God that began when he was eight.

"Both my parents (Jeff and Linda Morris) are devout Christians. Once I told them I wanted to make a decision to be a follower of Christ, they wanted to make sure it was for the right reasons. They wanted to make sure I understood what I was doing and that it wasn't a half-hearted commitment to Christ," he said.

He was baptized at Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville and is now a member of Willowbrook Baptist Church, Huntsville.

"[Christ] has been right beside me in a lot of decisions," he said. "It's something that I turn to every day. Now being a father, it's more important to lead my son in the direction of Christ; to bring him up to be a better Christian than I have been and to make myself better for him. There are more important things in life (than baseball) and family is certainly one of them."

"In minor league baseball, we are not celebrities, but there are kids who look up to us and adults as well," he said.

'Positive leader'

Huntsville center fielder Josh Prince said Morris is a positive leader.

"He is trying to live the way he knows he should. You can see it by his example, by what comes out of his mouth and how he handles himself. He is a very religious guy."

One regret Morris has is not being more vocal about his faith, especially when he is with a group of unbelievers.

"Sometimes I struggle to share the gospel with people. I have a little bit of a tough time putting my faith out there and trying to lead other people to Christ. It is something that I have been trying to change and get better at."

While the book of Philippians has helped him through "tough times," Morris focuses on Philippians 4:13, which he writes inside his baseball cap or on his cleats.

Morris and the other Christian Huntsville players have committed themselves to Jesus' Lordship.

"The most rewarding thing is to come in the locker room and put Christ first and know that whatever I do on the field, as long as I glorify Him, He is going to lead me in the right direction." ❧

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Episcopal Church convention approves same-sex rites

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Gay and lesbian Episcopalians are celebrating the July 10 approval of liturgical rites for blessing same-sex couples. But conservatives are threatening to take "drastic" steps to distance themselves from the Episcopal Church.

Episcopalians meeting at their triennial General Convention in Indianapolis, Ind., overwhelmingly approved the new rites. Lay members and priests voted 171-41 in favor of the same-sex blessings. Bishops voted 111-41, with three abstentions.

In doing so, the Episcopal Church joined a small but growing number of religious groups in the U.S. that have sanctioned rites for celebrating same-sex unions.

The same-sex rites resemble a marriage ceremony, with an exchange of vows and rings — but are not, technically, a wedding. Nor are the blessings included in the Book of Common Prayer, the Anglican Communion's official book of services and rites, which defines marriage as between a man and woman.

The diocese of South Carolina's delegation left the General Convention in protest July 11.

Under guidelines approved with the same-sex blessings, bishops do not have to allow them in their diocese. Nor can priests be forced to perform them.

ADF changes name to better communicate its purpose

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The Alliance Defense Fund, one of the nation's leading Christian legal groups, has a new name — the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF).

The organization switched to its new name July 9 in a change that accompanied a new logo and a tagline: "For Faith, For Justice." The new name will allow it to keep its often-used acronym, ADF.

"Our mission remains the same — defending religious liberty, the sanctity of life, and marriage and family. Only our name has changed," ADF President Alan Sears said in a statement. "The change is to help more people easily understand the work that we do and why it matters."

"The emphasis remains on the word 'alliance.' Continuously building an alliance of attorneys and like-minded individuals and organizations is absolutely essential to our mission. 'Defending Freedom' communicates the essence of what the alliance does: legally defending and advocating for religious freedom."

In a list of questions and answers on the ADF website, the legal group said the old name "confused people more than it clarified what the ministry is and what it accomplishes."

Bible museum plans to open in Washington

WASHINGTON — A large-scale Bible museum will open in Washington within four years, say planners who have been touring the world with portions of their collection.

Cary Summers, chief operating officer of The Museum of the Bible, a nonprofit umbrella group for the collection of the billionaire Green family of Oklahoma, said they considered Washington, Dallas and New York but decided the nation's capital was the best location. The final name of the museum and its exact location have not been disclosed but planners hope to confirm a location later this summer.

Summers, who has been a consultant on the Creation Museum's planned life-size Noah's Ark in Kentucky, said the Bible museum will charge admission.

Although the museums of the Smithsonian Institution are free, he noted that the Newseum and the Spy Museum both charge admission and have been successful.

Secular Student Alliance now available in high schools

COLUMBUS, Ohio — High school kids can join the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the Jewish Student Union, the Muslim Students Association and, in some schools, a Hindu or a Buddhist club. Now they can join the young atheists club too.

In another sign of the emergence of nonbelievers in American society, the Secular Student Alliance, a national organization of more than 300 college-based clubs for atheists, humanists, agnostics and other "freethinkers," is helping to establish clubs for high school students to hang out with other teens who share their skepticism about the supernatural.

There were about a dozen such clubs at the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic school year, a figure that rose to 39 in 17 states by summer break. The clubs are student-led. ❧

'SERVANT *spirit*'

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

SBOM's Mizzell retiring after 21 years in Christian ethics office

As a young preacher, Joe Bob Mizzell outlined his greatest dreams and set out to achieve them. Those dreams were to serve as pastor of a church running more than 500 in Sunday School attendance, earn a doctorate degree in ministry, become a full colonel in the Army National Guard, work for the Baptist denomination and have enough savings to live on after retirement. Fifty-seven years later, Mizzell looks back at that list and sees check marks beside each item.

As he prepares for retirement from his position as director of the office of Christian ethics at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), Mizzell is thankful for accomplishing much more than he could have hoped for or imagined.

"I think that God is extremely great and wonderful that He could use someone with so little talent, like me, to accomplish so much for His kingdom," he said. "I came out of a very poor home. No one had an education except one of my sisters."

Centered on education and ministry

Mizzell has come a long way from Isabella, his Chilton County hometown, and his many life achievements have remained centered on education and ministry. He was saved at age 11, called to preach at 18 years old and named pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Maplesville, in Chilton Baptist Association at age 19.

"I said, 'Lord, if you want me to be a minister and serve you, you're going to have to help me,'" Mizzell remembered. "Less than a month later, I was called to a church. We got it up to 100 in Sunday School. I went to visit people everywhere and people started coming in. The church started growing."

Mizzell said he was not afraid of such a large responsibility,

despite his youth. "My philosophy always was wherever God calls me, I will attempt to do it," he said. "This is what God called me to do, and I was being prepared to do it. I didn't think about it. I just spent my time working on sermons and studying."

Meanwhile, Mizzell also studied to receive his bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham then began teaching junior high school and coaching football, basketball and baseball. Although his desire to attend divinity school never left, he made the best use of his time while waiting for his wife, Peggie, to graduate from Birmingham Southern College. He earned a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Alabama.

"The day that Peggie graduated from Birmingham Southern College in May 1963, we loaded everything we had in a U-Haul trailer and went to New Orleans," Mizzell said.

There he continued his ministry.

"The first nine months, I didn't have a church," he noted. "Then I went out to supply (preach) at a church three miles from campus, and they ended up hiring me as pastor. They furnished us with a house to live in and paid \$62.50 per week. We saved money in seminary."

That was one of many more doors God opened for new opportunities in Mizzell's ministry. After graduating from seminary, he spent the next 27 years leading several Alabama Baptist churches including First Baptist Church, Guin, in Marion County Baptist Association; First Baptist Church, Childersburg, in Coosa River Baptist Association; and Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, in Tuscaloosa Baptist Association.

During this time he began a new ministry as a chaplain in the Army National Guard, a military career that spanned 24 years. Mizzell said he would preach to the soldiers first and then preach during his church's normal worship services.

"I was based in Childersburg, Talladega, Tuscaloosa, Birmingham and state headquarters in Montgomery," he said. "I was state chaplain over all the chaplains in the Army National Guard for two years."

Twenty-one years ago, Mizzell became the first person to serve in his current position at the SBOM. Still he was not worried about his new responsibility to fight to maintain and strengthen the state's moral and ethical atmosphere.

"I didn't even have a job description," Mizzell said. "I did not know how to do it but the door was open and I stepped in. It's been a great 21 years."

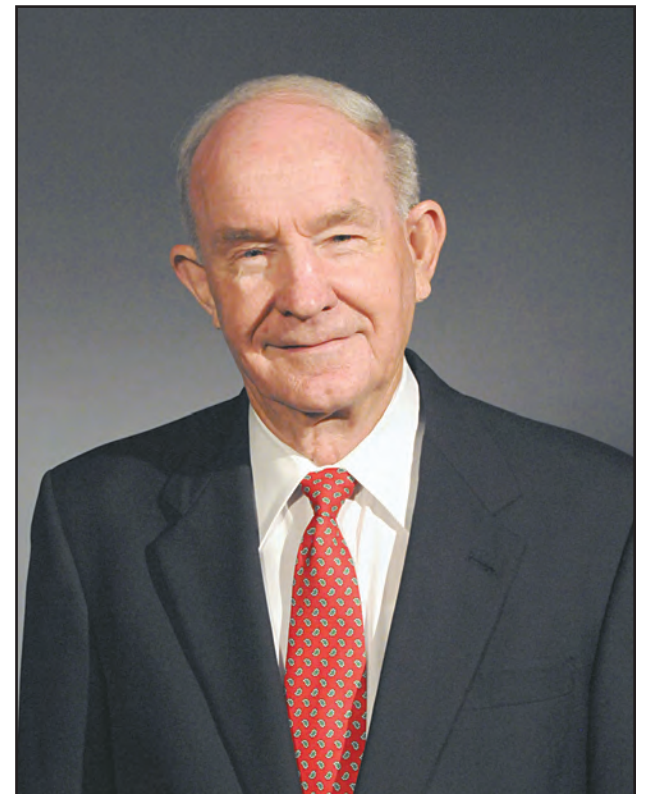
At times, many of Mizzell's ministry activities intertwined.

"I spent 10 days traveling throughout South Korea preaching to the Korean Army each night," Mizzell said. "I was sent by (then executive director) Dr. Troy Morrison through a partnership with the South Korea Baptist Convention and the Alabama Baptist Convention. We would have from 500 to 2,500 soldiers at each service. Six hundred people came to know Christ during those 10 days."

SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance said these ministries reflect Mizzell's "pastoral heart ... servant spirit and concern for others."

"Joe Bob Mizzell exemplifies and epitomizes the essence of second-mile Christianity," Lance said. "His attitude is one of 'going beyond the call of duty' in ministry for the Lord."

Some of Mizzell's duties have included promoting the World Hunger Offering, organizing a chaplain/spouse re-



MIZZELL

training and deploying chaplains for disaster relief, planning the SBOM's legislative prayer luncheon, working with the Christian Life Commission and serving as liaison for the state convention's resolutions committee. He considers his role in helping defeat the lottery in 1999 one of the most important highlights of his SBOM ministry.

"I came up with a list of nine things that churches should do in helping the people to know that the lottery was not wise and good in Alabama," Mizzell said. "I went from church to church, put out signs by the hundreds and got the people involved."

He has received countless awards including the 2001 Distinguished Service Award from The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and a 2012 resolution from the Alabama Senate for his outstanding achievement and dedicated service.

When Mizzell officially retires Aug. 15, he plans to return to full-time ministry as pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion, in Cahaba Baptist Association, where he currently serves as interim pastor. He also will continue working with Joe Godfrey and Dan Ireland through Alabama Citizens Action Program. His SBOM colleagues say he will be missed.

'A tremendous influence and blessing'

"It has been a joy and a privilege to work with Dr. Mizzell for the past 21 years," said Joanne Farmer, who has served as his ministry assistant during his entire tenure at SBOM.

"His dedication, positive attitude, work ethic and values have been a tremendous influence and blessing in my personal life and work. ... Dr. Mizzell's life reflects Christian character and integrity and he has shown exemplary leadership in his spiritual, personal and professional life. He is a compassionate servant and a committed witness for our Lord and Savior."

Lance agreed.

"I first met Joe Bob Mizzell while I was a student at New Orleans [Baptist Theological] Seminary," he said. "My first impression of him was that of a friendly Christian gentleman and a faithful servant of the Lord. In the decades since that initial encounter, my impression of him was even more concrete concerning these admirable traits as well as others. He has been an excellent communications liaison between the SBOM and the churches in the Alabama Baptist family."

Overall, Mizzell is grateful for all of the opportunities God has provided for him through the years.

"It's amazing how many friends I have over this state — in the military, preachers, pastors, politicians," he said. "God has blessed me and I thank Alabama Baptists for providing funds through the Cooperative Program for my education and ministry and allowing me to serve my state convention." ❧



Photo courtesy of Joe Bob Mizzell

NEW OPPORTUNITIES — Joe Bob Mizzell (left) served as chaplain of the Army National Guard for 24 years. Pictured with him is General Ivan Smith.