

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



July 26, 2012
Vol. 177, No. 29

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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www.thealabamabaptist.org

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Identifying God-given talents

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist churches help people find employment through job ministries

Unemployment in Alabama has been an issue since late 2009, when more than 10 percent of Alabamians were out of work. However, the current statewide unemployment rate of 7.8 percent is still high, and many Alabama Baptist churches are seeking to help those who are counted in that number.

First Baptist Church, Pelham, in Shelby Baptist Association began a career ministry three years ago. Jansen Richardson is one of six volunteers who helps in the Job Concern Ministry. Richardson said their goal is essentially to help people find employment.

"We do as much as we possibly can to meet the needs of those who come into contact with our ministry and to help people find jobs," Richardson said.

One of the challenges of a jobs ministry is that each individual has different needs. Those needs

may vary from emotional support to financial support. Some clients may be looking for a better job. Others will be happy just to find a job. Some are first-time job seekers; others are professionals looking for a new start.

What they all have in common — according to Joe Baker, who heads up the Career Ministry at First Baptist Church, Prattville, in Autauga Baptist Association — is a need to improve their job-hunting skills and to find a job that fits their particular skills and aptitudes.

Prattville's Career Ministry is a member of Crossroads Career Network (CCN), a national community of churches providing faith-based job search and career transition resources based in Charlotte, N.C. Baker said one of the benefits of the ministry's affiliation with CCN is the organization's workbook, which leads job seekers through activities to identify their God-given talents, abilities and interests and then provides strategies to maximize those talents in their job search.

"We do not advertise that we find people jobs,

but we equip people with the skills they need to find a job that fits their needs," Baker said.

As in the business world, networking is important in a career ministry, Richardson said. Volunteers at First, Pelham, utilize their own business contacts, as well as community resources, to connect clients with job openings. The personal relationship ministry volunteers develop with clients helps them to make connections quickly when they learn of job openings.

"As soon as we are aware of a job, we communicate that to people in our system who might have the qualifications needed," Richardson said.

Richardson gave an example of a client who had been the manager of a large retirement community in Florida. The man had moved to the Birmingham area because of an illness in his wife's family and was looking for employment. Through one of his contacts, a jobs ministry volunteer heard of an administrative job at a local country club and the client was later hired for the position.

(See 'Prayer,' page 16)

"We do as much as we possibly can to meet the needs of those who come into contact with our ministry and to help people find jobs."

Jansen Richardson, Job Concern Ministry

COMMENT

A Changed Life Is the Real Award

Did you see the announcement about your state Baptist paper published in the May 24 issue? The announcement was a little understated for such an unusual accomplishment, so it would have been easy to miss. Let me explain.

In the United States there are three ecumenical religious journalism organizations. Religious Communicators Council (RCC) is an interfaith group. Evangelical Press Association (EPA) is composed of media serving the evangelical audience. Associated Church Press (ACP) is the oldest of the three and has membership from mainline Protestants, evangelicals and Roman Catholic publications.

This year *The Alabama Baptist* was selected as the best regional religious newspaper in the nation by RCC and EPA. ACP gave *The Alabama Baptist* second place in that category. That is as close to a clean sweep for any publication that I can remember in all my years in religious jour-

nalism. This year was the ninth time RCC has honored *The Alabama Baptist* with its top award for regional Christian newspapers. For EPA, it is the second time the Alabama Baptist state paper has been so honored.

ACP has awarded *The Alabama Baptist* first place in the regional Christian newspaper category four of the last nine years. The other five years the paper finished second. Taken together, this is the 16th consecutive year the Alabama Baptist state newspaper has been honored by at least one of these three organizations as one of the top two regional Christian newspapers in the United States.

The work of the staff won other awards too. Among them was coverage of the April 27 tornadoes, which gained top honors from each of the three ecumenical organizations. The judge for ACP wrote of the coverage, "This is what good journalism is supposed to be."

Obviously all of us at *The Alabama Baptist* are pleased that the state Baptist paper was judged so highly when compared to hundreds of other publications. And as editor, I am thrilled for the accomplishments of the writers, photographers, designers, copy editors and all the others who contributed to producing the award-winning publication.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

But as someone observed, with those awards and a couple of dollars, you might be able to get a cup of coffee. In other words, the awards are nice. They attest to the professionalism of *The Alabama Baptist* each week. But that is not the primary way the paper is evaluated by Alabama Baptists.

Those who read the paper each week want to know how the paper helps them be a better Christian. Those who help underwrite the paper through Cooperative Program (CP) support want to know how the state Baptist paper helps build up the body of Christ known as Alabama Baptists. Unless the paper accomplishes these things, the awards are just sound and fury signifying nothing.

Testimonies from those who read the paper and use the paper are the most important awards ever received by the state Baptist paper.

When a mother stops to express appreciation for the feature on organ transplants because her son needs a new kidney and she has questions about the

process from a biblical perspective, that means the paper wins an award.

When a church training group uses the state Baptist paper as a guide to discuss current issues from a biblical perspective, that means the state Baptist paper wins an award.

When readers share they use the state Baptist paper as a prayer guide each week to help them pray for real needs around the world, that means the state Baptist paper wins an award.

When congressmen and state legislators get a letter or phone call from a constituent because that person read an article in his or her state Baptist paper, that is another award.

When a church decides to increase its CP giving or at least not to cut it during recessionary times, that is yet another major award.

Baptists use the state Baptist paper because they know it works. This year International Mission Board President Tom Elliff joins those urging Alabama Baptists to subscribe to their state Baptist paper. In a video available to churches he points out that the state Baptist paper is the primary source of missions information for Southern Baptists.

State evangelism director Sammy Gilbreath often says that whenever there is a story about evangelism in *The Alabama Baptist*, he has to make sure his office has adequate staffing to cover the phones because calls and invitations will pour in.

And study after study demonstrates that churches that provide the state Baptist paper to their active families give more to missions than churches that do not provide the paper.

The mission of *The Alabama Baptist* focuses on the individual — "to empower readers to live out the biblical concepts of Christian discipleship." This is the paper's vision statement. Stories identify who Alabama Baptists are in the family of God, teach what we believe, illustrate how we work together, promote all we do and encourage Christian discipleship. Articles remind that Alabama Baptists are part of a faith family larger than a local congregation, lift the missions vision to the ends of the earth, put names and faces on abstract concepts, inspire with stories of victory and faithfulness, offer perspective for complex issues before Baptists and provide a common source of reliable information that makes cooperation possible.

Creating Christian disciples

The Alabama Baptist is not a luxury for leftover funds in the church budget. It is a necessity for any church serious about creating Christian disciples — serious about joining others to share the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

Sunday, July 29 is Read *The Alabama Baptist* Day on the state convention calendar. It is a time to draw attention to the contributions of the state Baptist paper to the lives of individuals and to the life of the convention. It is a time to pray for the paper's ministry and to encourage any who do not regularly read the paper to subscribe. Please participate in this important day. As editor, I assure you all of us will do our best to continue providing a publication that receives favorable reviews from professional religious journalists. But the awards we really want are the positive changes God makes in lives because they read *The Alabama Baptist*. 📖

CONNECTING
Alabama
Baptists

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

"*The Alabama Baptist* newspaper simply keeps me informed!!! I was not at the convention but I was there simply because this newspaper was there."

— JC Thompson Sr.

"I have read it since joining my Baptist church; three years. I love it."

— Joe Jackson

Letters to the Editor

See page 17



“If ye continue in my word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
John 8:31-32

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and other locations.

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Church Budget — \$12.50 (plus tax)
Individual — \$20.95

ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

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Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

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Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Circulation Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.



Lizzie Baker, youth minister at Holy Trinity Church, Redhill, United Kingdom, talks during the church’s weekly youth gathering. She often gets to speak about Christianity in schools as well, something she says is a good opportunity to connect with the nation’s youth.

IMB photo

‘As a Christian I believe’

Church of England reaches out to youth in postmodern society

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

Snowflakes dance around the old stone church and dust the detailed crevices of its exterior like highlights.

Snow is not common in southern England, but Lizzie Baker’s getting accustomed to seeing it blanket the town around her church a little more frequently than it used to.

Much like political correctness does. “There are growing dangers of having to water down your faith to be acceptable in this culture,” said Baker, youth minister at Holy Trinity Church, Redhill, U.K. “It’s a post-modern society. There is no truth. ‘Whatever you believe, that’s fine’ — that’s the pervasive thought.”

But it is another thought entirely that keeps the youth worker trudging out in the snow every week to nearby schools to talk to teenagers.

“We know we have a God who is God over all,” she said.

And she would like for these students to meet Him.

In some respects the spiritual landscape of England does not look too different from that of the States, Baker said. British people put great stock in security — money, family, cars and houses.

“It’s really hard for people to see that they need God when they have such self-sufficiency,” she said.

But one factor is pretty different from the U.S. There is no separation of church and state. This is seen as a blessing by some and as a curse by others, Baker said.

She chooses to see it as a blessing.

With the Church of England’s government ties comes a state requirement that schools teach religion, and that allows Baker access to classrooms, assemblies and teenagers she would not otherwise get to meet. She teaches the gospel message, the tenets of the faith, and

sometimes holds reflection times for the student body with prayer and devotionals.

The arrangement comes with the catch that other religions, not just Christianity, can be taught, which “is really, really hard, because then you are just one voice amongst many,” Baker said. “You have to caveat everything you say with ‘as a Christian I believe,’ or ‘as the Bible says.’”

But it opens doors to talk to teenagers, so she considers it an opportunity.

She looks similarly at the Church

of England church where she serves.

She grew up in a Baptist church, a “free” church, and there she chose to follow Christ. But the Church of England demonstrates beauty in a different way from Baker — a field snowy white unto harvest. It comes in all brands and styles across its 16,000 congregations — from liturgical to charismatic, contemporary to traditional.

British folks often attend their local Church of England as a cultural institution, a place

(See ‘Ripe,’ page 15)



IMB photo

Summer Olympics in London

The Summer Olympics in London are July 27 through Aug. 12. The London Baptist Association and the International Mission Board plan to minister to tens of thousands of internationals visiting the United Kingdom. Hundreds of churches in England are also expected to serve in different ministries. For more information, visit morethangold.org.uk.

MINISTERING

through medicine

Fort Payne group joins Nehemiah Teams in Philippines

Turning heads of Filipinos as they entered villages, the medical missions team from Fort Payne brought help for physical and spiritual needs. For most of the Filipinos it was their first time seeing an American, and the team left quite an impression.

The team consisted of a pediatrician, a pharmacist, a dentist, a nurse, a civil engineer, a housewife and five teens. During the five-day span they treated 1,196 people, pulled hundreds of teeth and shared the Bible through stories and dramas.

The team came to assist the work of the Nehemiah Team, a group of 17 students from several states staying in the rural areas of northern Mindanao in order to provide health care. The Nehemiah Team is split into four teams in different villages where the medical missions team visited and administered medical care.

The group's daily routine included traveling to rural villages, setting up medical areas and administering medical care to locals, returning to the city after the last patient was cared for or they ran



The Nehemiah Team in the Philippines and a medical missions group from Fort Payne joined forces to minister to local Filipinos in the rural areas of northern Mindanao.

Photo courtesy of Nehemiah Teams Media

out of supplies for the day.

The days were long, but the team remained in good spirits as they laughed with the locals. Dentist Anthony Vizzinia and his daughter, Kellie, kept smiles on their faces as they saw 168 people and pulled hundreds of teeth.

Mike Story, who was on his seventh medical missions trip to the Philippines, and Rhea Mackey conducted quick checkups for families, some having more than 10 members, and provided medication for cold, fever and pain and antibiotics

for more serious illnesses.

The teenagers on the team performed dramas that explained salvation through Jesus Christ in an artistic and modern fashion and captured the attention of all who watched.

Once the mission was complete, the team left remaining supplies and equipment for Filipinos to use. The remaining supplies will help the Nehemiah Team complete their mission for the summer and sustain their efforts in each village. (Nehemiah Teams Media)



Photo courtesy of Crawford Baptist Church

Hackleburg's Emmanuel Baptist rebuilds

Several volunteer teams have worked throughout the summer to rebuild Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, including a team of 26 from Crawford Baptist Church, Mobile, which served June 10-16. Another team arrived the week after to lay brick. The previous building was destroyed in the April 27, 2011, tornadoes.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Keown marks 30 years at Phenix City's Lakewood

July 11 was a milestone for Charles Keown, minister of music and senior adults for Lakewood Baptist Church, Phenix City, as it marked his 30th year ministering through melody at the church. "That's got to be some kind of a record," said Onezima Everritt, office manager and finance secretary at Lakewood Baptist.

During his 30 years of ministry, Keown has served the Russell Baptist Association church as minister of music and youth, then as the minister of music and now as minister of music and senior adults. He joined the Lakewood staff after graduating from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Keown originally planned to follow in his father's footsteps and become a pastor but changed paths at the suggestion of the late Kenneth Bergdolt, then a professor of music at Mobile College (now the University of Mobile).

Bergdolt planted a seed, Keown said, encouraging him to minister to young people instead. This seed flourished into a 30-year ministry that has evolved and adapted with each passing year.

With the full support of Lakewood behind him, Keown has led a children's choir, youth choir, young men's ensemble, orchestra and senior adult choir.

He said he hopes these programs encourage a love of music and worship in the next generation, no matter what style of music is preferred.

The senior adult choir has approximately 90 members from Lakewood and surrounding churches. The choir has been invited to Life-Way conferences for senior adults multiple times and has traveled as far as Spain at the request of the International Mission Board to lead worship services. Keown said he is proud of the "very talented" group.

The orchestra is another arm of Lakewood's music ministry and is incorporated in the blended worship service on Sunday mornings. Created in 1997, the orchestra boasts a variety of instruments, including trumpets, saxophones, flutes, clarinets, a baritone, a tuba, a French horn, a violin and a viola. Keown plays the trombone in the orchestra.

He also has fostered a love of music in all four of his children, beginning all of them on an instrument at the age of 5. He laughingly said he "raised [his] own string section."

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

'Billy' Harris joins evangelism staff at SBOM

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) office of evangelism welcomed William "Billy" Harris into its fold as a part-time associate in June.

Harris, who is also pastor of Isney Baptist Church, Silas, was asked to join the SBOM staff by office of evangelism director Sammy Gilbreath. Gilbreath said Harris is a "great fit" for the position and was pleased when he accepted the regional evangelism strategist role.

Within the office, Harris assists associations and churches from Montgomery to the Florida state line in training believers to witness for Christ. This includes revitalizing churches, hosting workshops and planning intentional evangelism events.

Harris received a bachelor's degree from Mobile College (now University of Mobile) before attending New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was the recipient of two awards for academic excellence. He earned his doctorate from Andersonville Theological Seminary in Camilla, Ga., in 2008.

In regards to his extensive schooling, Harris laughingly refers to himself as being "educated beyond [his] intelligence."

Harris ministered in churches in Yellow Pine, Coffeeville, Mobile, Linden, Pine Hill, Gallion, Dickinson, Thomasville, Butler, Nicholville and Sweet Water before settling at Isney Baptist in July 2006.

As an evangelism strategist, Harris said he hopes to get Alabama back on track with the command of the Great Commission. "It's a cutting-edge challenge and a really exciting opportunity," he said. "It's been so rewarding to go meet pastors and try to motivate and encourage them ... it's a lot of fun."

Harris and his wife, Patty, have two daughters.

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)



HARRIS

Families on Mission

Shelby Association hosts ministry outreach event allowing families of all ages to serve together

Shelby Baptist Association hosted its fourth annual Families on Mission (FOM) event July 7–11. This ministry outreach program encourages families, from grandparents to kindergarten-age children, to minister together through a variety of activities and projects.

This year the program's focus was on reaching community children through backyard Bible clubs, which are condensed versions of Vacation Bible School. There was also some light construction work completed.

The event was divided into four sites: University Mobile Home Park in Montevallo,

Sunshine Farm Day Camp in Sterrett, Shelby Association Ministry Center in Columbiana and Belle Vista Trailer Park in Pelham.

Through these sites, 325 volunteers from churches across Shelby Association were able to minister to 177 children and 10 adults.

The week began July 7 with prayer walking and passing out flyers for the two mobile home sites. All the volunteers united that evening at North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, to fellowship through a meal and worship service.

The next day volunteers worshiped at the individual sites' host churches and had orientation so they could "hit the ground running" July 9, FOM coordinator Debbie Snyder said.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Volunteers from FBC Pelham minister to children at University Mobile Home Park in Montevallo as part of Shelby Baptist Association's Families on Mission event.

North Shelby Baptist hosted FOM for evening meals and collective worship services July 9–11.

The event was a complete success, Snyder said, despite the rainy conditions that forced volunteers to adapt to new plans.

"I highly admire and am utterly grateful for the volunteers," Snyder said. "I've always loved doing this. It's a lot of work, but the joy definitely outweighs the work."

The week concluded at North Shelby Baptist with a service thanking the volunteers for

all their work. The service included a sermon from North Shelby Baptist Pastor Allan Murphy and was followed by an ice cream social. Each family that participated was presented a towel embroidered with the phrase "Serving Christ Together."

Shelby Association will host a similar event next year under the name Family Mission Adventures.

For more information, contact Debbie Snyder at 205-669-7858 or email debbie@shelbybaptist.org. (TAB)

Families share Christ's love to Hispanic residents in Montevallo

Volunteers from First Baptist Church, Pelham; Iglesia Bethel, Calera; and The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, came together to minister to the predominately Hispanic residents of the University Mobile Home Park in Montevallo during Families on Mission (FOM).

Eleven families participated in FOM and were able to share Christ's love with 40 children and nine adults.

The week began July 7 with prayer

walking and canvassing the neighborhood, followed by backyard Bible clubs July 9–11.

The children, who ranged in age from 2 to 14, rotated through four stations each morning — music, crafts, Bible class and recreation — while the adults learned about the Bible from Iglesia Bethel Pastor Felipe Rangel and his wife, Yaneth. By the end of the week at least 20 children prayed to receive Christ, Rangel said.

"We've been well received," said Andie

Bell, site leader and volunteer. "We're here to love on the kids and the rest is minor details."

This is Bell's fourth year being involved in FOM and had three of her five children at the ministry site with her, helping as much as they were able at the various stations.

Bell, a member of First Baptist, Pelham, said her favorite part about FOM is that it is local. "We can come back very easily. They're our neighbors and being this close,

we'll see them when we run errands or go to Walmart."

Also from First, Pelham, Yadira Estrada was a valuable volunteer because she speaks Spanish fluently. Estrada's bilingualism was very helpful during registration and helped the mobile home residents feel at ease, Bell said.

"I always point back to God," Estrada said, referring to how she got recruited to participate in this ministry. "[My husband and I] have been asking Him for purpose, and here I am."

The week flew by for Estrada and her daughter, Emilia, she said, making the last day a bittersweet experience.

"I'm not ready for it to end," Estrada said. "But I think people have been touched. The love of Christ has no language."

Through this event a seed was planted in this community. Rangel and Iglesia Bethel will water and nurture that seed to fruition through a weekly Bible study on Tuesday mornings with some of the adults from the mobile home park.

Rangel is experienced in nurturing young believers. Iglesia Bethel began as a congregation of two and has grown to a congregation of 120 with the support of Northside Baptist Church, Calera.

Northside Baptist has shared its facilities and resources with Iglesia Bethel, allowing Rangel to focus on reaching out to new believers. Thanks to FOM, Rangel said two families expressed an interest in joining Iglesia Bethel. "The week was amazing," Rangel said. "It was a great experience."

At the end of the week, Shelby Baptist Association purchased Bibles for every child in University Mobile Home Park, as well as for the children in Belle Vista Trailer Park.

Volunteers minister to children at Sunshine Farm

Children in bathing suits laughed and smiled as they enjoyed the inflated dolphin waterslides, jumped on a moon bounce and played kickball with other children at the Sunshine Farm Day Camp in Sterrett during the Families on Mission event.

From July 9 to 11, members of First Baptist Church, Vincent, and volunteers engaged 130 children in devotional games, recreation activities and crafts.

"The children have participated in devotion activities over the past three days and recreational fun and games," said Darryl Wood, pastor of First Baptist, Vincent. "We had a wonderful time."

The event was held at Sunshine Farm, a sprawling camp replete with a bunkhouse, horse stable, archery range and open fields surrounding a large pond where children can fish and paddle boat. Two members



Photo by Maggie Walsh

of First, Vincent, own the farm, which has hosted the event for the past four years.

Approximately 40 families from Shelby Baptist Association assisted First, Vincent, by leading the small devotion groups.

Tim Taylor brought his family to the event, and they helped in different capacities.

"I enjoyed being a group leader for a group of sixth-grade boys from all different backgrounds," Taylor said. "I had a great time getting to know them."

Taylor said this event is a great outreach to neighborhoods in the area to teach children about Christ.

"These children need exactly what we need — a strong relationship with Christ," he said.

Farm employees also received a blessing from the outreach ministry. Casey Greene worked in the stables where kids were able to pet and interact with the horses. They also had the opportunity to ride as the stable workers led the horses around.

Greene has family members who attend First, Vincent, and has been working at the stables four years.

"I love to see the kids out here," she said. "They really seem to enjoy it." (TAB)

(Stories by Brittney Knox and Maggie Walsh)

What ministry assistants wish pastors knew



Respect, appreciation, common courtesy help create affirmation

Pastors, do you know what your ministry assistant wishes you knew? Lana Rose knows. Ministry assistants have told her. Rose is the ministry assistant specialist for the Tennessee Baptist Convention and leads a ministry assistant (MA) conference for LifeWay Christian Resources.

"Most churches have fewer than 200 members," Rose said. "These churches usually have one ministry assistant and maybe one financial secretary. So these MAs have a lot of work to do."

She said, "Respect, appreciation and common courtesy go a long way in helping an MA feel affirmed in the work."

When Rose asked the assistants on her email list what they wish their pastors knew, dozens of responses came quickly. They seemed to fall into three categories: professional, personal and personality.

Professional

► I could be a wealth of information to him. I often stand in the gap between him and the church members, so I have knowledge that could be helpful if he would just ask.

► I would like to be reimbursed when I use my own car and cell phone for church business.

► I would like for him to go to bat for me on salary and benefit issues. I deserve to make a livable wage.

► I want to be acknowledged for my professional skills. I am skilled in computer software, financial software and graphic design, plus I have exceptional interpersonal and relational skills that I use with church members and church staff members.

Personal

► I want to have the freedom to come to him and appropriately share struggles within the church family. He doesn't always know what is going on.

► I want to be kept in the loop. If he gets a call about a celebration, a sickness or especially a death in the church family, I need to know. And I'd like to be kept informed about his schedule.

► I appreciate it when he talks positively about me in front of church members and other church staff members. If they see that he values me, they will value me as well.

► I am intensely loyal to him and our church. I stand up for him when others criticize him.

Personality

► I wish he would say "good morning" to me when he comes in each day and would show interest in my family and me.

► I wish he would be more in tune with the church members' struggles and health issues. I hear about it when they think he doesn't care.

► I'd like to see him visit with church members more, especially the homebound.

► I want him to understand that no matter how much education he has or how well he preaches, people mostly just care about how much he loves them.

► I wish he would spend more time with his family and in prayer.

To find out about ministry assistant resources in Alabama Baptist life, visit www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com or call the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of LeaderCare and church administration at 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 316. (LifeWay, TAB)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► The Southcrest Gospel Singing ministry of **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host UpLifted and McAdams Quartet Aug. 3, 7:30 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will hold "Sunday Night Revival" Aug. 5, 6 p.m. with the theme, "Do you know where you will spend Eternity?" Billy Hatley will speak. Dale Creel is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Goodman Church, Enterprise**, will hold evangelistic services every Monday evening during August, 7 p.m. each evening. Chad Hixson will speak and Jeff Mills will lead music Aug. 6. Roger Stone will speak and Debi Stark will lead music Aug. 13. Sam Totten will speak and Wade Lewis will lead

music Aug. 20. Sam Self will speak and Adele Self will lead music Aug. 27. Bruce Williams is pastor.

ELMORE

► **First Church, Tallassee**, will celebrate its anniversary homecoming Aug. 5, 10 a.m. Former Pastors David Bentley and James M. Jackson will speak and dinner on the grounds will follow. Derek Gentle is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Limestone Association** will hold a minister's meeting/lunch Aug. 6, 10 a.m. at Lindsay Lane Church, Athens. Daniel Edmonds and Steve Parr will speak. Robert Fullerton is director of missions.

MUD CREEK

► **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will hold a fifth Sunday singing July 29, 1:30 p.m. Sail On

will sing. Johnny Thacker is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Pine Grove Church, Phenix City**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 5, 10 a.m. The Ward Family will lead music. Lunch will follow at noon. Tommy Poole is pastor.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Pelham**, will hold revival Aug. 5-8. Sammy Gilbreath, director of evangelism for the State Board of Missions, will speak Aug. 8, 8 a.m., 9:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. Paula Kornegay will lead worship. Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Church, Pensacola, Fla., will speak Sunday night, 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. Worship leaders will be George Weeks (Sunday night), Bruce Hill (Monday night), Rick Stone (Tuesday night) and Don Dixon (Wednesday night).



Castleberry's London Baptist marks 100 years

To commemorate its centennial church anniversary, members of London Baptist Church, Castleberry, celebrated June 10 and honored several key members who have been vital in the church's history.

There was a large crowd at the Conecuh Baptist Association church, and many former members attended the milestone event.

A special component of the celebration was the recognition given to integral members of the church's history.

"We were able to honor our oldest living member, Edna Mae Barlow, who is 95 years old," Pastor Irby Jackson said.

In addition, they recognized the relatives of the Oliver, Poole and Warren families, who were the first three deacons of the church.

The service began at 10 a.m. and included music led by the church's music minister.

The day's message about serving God was delivered by Bryan Garrett, pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church, Brewton.

Garrett attended London Baptist during his childhood and his grandmother and father are still active members of the church.

Jackson was presented with a plaque from Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Don Donald. The plaque commemorated the church's 100 years.

Jackson, who has been with the church for two years, said his goal for London Baptist is to see growth.

"It would be great to see immediate growth in the church," he said. "We want to see not just numerical growth, but spiritual growth as well." (Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

FBC Creola celebrates 50 years of existence

Retrospective slideshows, anniversary booklets and a heartfelt message were all components of the 50th church anniversary celebration for First Baptist Church, Creola. The celebration took place June 3 at the Mobile Baptist Association church.

The 135 people in attendance included former members who came to celebrate the milestone. Also in attendance were the seven charter members, five of which are still active church members.

Event organizer Marilyn Middleton said the celebration began at 10 a.m. with songs led by Charles Steelman, guest minister of music and former musician for the church.

The day's message included remarks from former pastor Charles Mitchell.

Another special element was the dedication of the church anniversary booklet. "We ... made a church anniversary booklet that illustrated the history of the church," Middleton said. "The book was dedicated to Beulah Hopkins Langham, an instrumental woman in the church who recently passed away."

Pastor Al Brown was presented with a plaque from an Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative. The plaque commemorated the church's 50 years.

Brown, who will mark two years as the church's pastor in July, said his vision for First, Creola, is to continue to grow.

"I just want to see the church prosper, grow and continue to fulfill the Great Commission," he said. "We here are actively pursuing the Great Commission in Creola and beyond." (Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

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.



Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 □ www.alsbom.org

Big Boys Do Cry

Tears welled up in my eyes when I stood applauding the election of Fred Luter as the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention. I was not alone in the demonstrative display of emotion. You could feel it in the atmosphere of the room. Few times have I experienced such a moment as that in a gathering of fellow SBC messengers at a convention meeting.

Having grown up in Birmingham during the height of the civil rights era, I was so glad that we as Southern Baptists could come to the place where we could celebrate such a moment. There were times in the past when I saw progress in racial reconciliation, but there were never moments such as this one when we could come together and rejoice in the Lord over them. Thankfully, that high and holy moment came during this SBC meeting.

At the National African-American Fellowship meeting, I joined hundreds of others, Anglo and African-American, in a worship service where our new president spoke so eloquently and poignantly about what brought him to this place of leadership at this strategic time in our history. Fred Luter has never preached a bad sermon; at least I have never heard him to do so. On this occasion, he

was at his best.

His message was vintage Fred Luter. He was humble but courageous. Fred told of being asked by a reporter why he wanted to be president. He answered "Why not?" Then he laid out three reasons for his willingness to serve. First, because of "the right person." He was speaking of course of Jesus, our Lord, as being the right Person. Fred described how he sought the Lord in determining whether he should allow himself to be nominated. He and his wife prayed and fasted for a lengthy period before accepting the challenge.

The second point of his message focused on "the right process." This was the process of waiting for the right time to serve. Years ago, Fred was approached about being nominated for the position, and he said, "The time is not right." Concerning this point, Fred Luter spoke so clearly about how change takes time and very few of us want to wait on it. "Waiting on the Lord" is a part of preparation for service, and Fred Luter knew that so well. Now, his time had come.

As Fred transitioned to his third point which focused on "the right promises," the crowd was reaching a crescendo of emotion. Many were standing and clapping.

Everyone in that room, Anglo or African-American, stood on the same promises: the promises of God! We all were applauding and praising the Lord for His precious promises.

In electing Fred Luter as our new president, Southern Baptists were electing one of our own and

By Rick Lance
*State Missionary
Executive Director*



one of our best. I remember well when Fred preached last year at our state convention. He was not feeling well, and yet he told me that he had to travel back to New Orleans during the night to be present for an associational meeting the next morning. This is a strong indication of what kind of leader we have in our new president.

Fred Luter understands Baptist life on all levels. He has served his church, Franklin Avenue Baptist so well during the past 25 years, especially in the aftermath of Katrina. He is involved in his local association and state convention in vital ways. He is an example of commitment to missions at every point of Baptist life." He knows Southern Baptists well.

I left this convention meeting

feeling like we have made some positive history. We now can turn not just a page in our history but begin a whole new chapter. We need to pray for our new president as he leads us. As is always the case, pressures will mount upon him, and the secular world will put him to test in ways no other president has been tested in the recent past. However, I believe in Fred Luter, and I know that with the Lord's help he is up to the task.

As young boy growing up, I often heard the tired old saying, "Big boys don't cry." I am glad that trite expression is so wrong because when my friend and brother, Fred Luter, was elected as our president, I shed a few tears. I couldn't help it. It was indeed a high and holy moment for us all and I am glad I lived to see it.



Numbers 14:24

ENGAGE 24

Within the pages of Scripture and throughout the history of the world, God has been seeking people to engage Him, and then to engage the world with the Gospel of Jesus. Engage24 is a 24-hour period focused on engaging the world with the Good News of Christ. While Engage24 is intensely focused on a single day of evangelism (10/11/12), our mission is to promote a 24/7 lifestyle of evangelism and engagement with the Gospel.

ENGAGE24 is a 24 hour period when college students will make a coordinated effort to engage their campuses with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our desire is to see every believing college student share the Gospel with one person that day.

We are engaging on 10/11/12. Will you?

Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

ALABAMA BAPTIST YOUTH MINISTER GULF SHORES RETREAT

OCTOBER 21-23, 2012 • GULF SHORES BEACH RETREAT

Join us on Sunday evening, October 21, to begin a great time of training and networking with Baptist Youth Ministers from our state. This event is for full-time, part-time, and volunteer youth ministers in Alabama Baptist churches.

THE EVENT IS FREE! You are responsible for your own transportation.
REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 11. Register with Ministry Assistant Lydia Patterson at lpatterson@alsbom.org or 334-613-2275.



WHO KNEW? *The First Three Weeks of College...*

Transitions

Helping high school students take the next step in their faith journey.



What a student does during their first three weeks of college sets the pattern for his whole college career in the relationships he establishes and the patterns he develops.

Help lay the groundwork for Christlike college experiences by connecting yourself or your students with collegiate ministers by visiting www.sbccampusconnect.net.

Once you go to the web page, enter contact information for yourself or your student. It takes less than three minutes and it will be networked to the campus of your choice!

Collegiate and Student Ministries • 1.800.264.1225, ext. 275 • (334) 613.2275

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The Bully Issue: A Prevention Approach



The Office of Collegiate and Student Ministries presents a "Drive-In" Youth Ministry Training Event in partnership with American Character Builders.

Thursday, September 27, 2012, at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. For more details: www.thestudenthub.org.

Bullying is an ever increasing issue for youth today. Some studies indicate that as many as 70% of all students have been bullied. Join us for training in a ministry-based response to a critical issue.

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Noted author to speak at Church Media Institute, August 2

Samford To Host Evening With Noted Christian Author Andy Crouch Aug. 2

Samford University will host a multimedia musical exploration of the "Ingredients of Excellence" with influential Christian author Andy Crouch **Thursday, Aug. 2 at 7 p.m.** in the university's Brock Recital Hall. A limited number of public tickets are available for **\$10 each**. Tickets may be purchased online through www.samford.edu or by phone at **(205) 726-2853**.

Andy Crouch is a dynamic and creative musician, producer, minister, editor and author of *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, winner of Christianity Today's 2009 Book Award for Christianity and Culture.



The event is the culmination of the two-day Church Media Institute at Samford, which Crouch will help lead. Those who wish to attend the full Church Media Institute can learn more at <http://howard.samford.edu/churchmediainstitute>.

FOCUS on One Mission



Twon Mai

Student at a Baptist university
On mission with a Baptist Campus Ministry
Planning to be a church planter

That's what the Cooperative Program is to me.



For information and resources about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org. or visit www.alsbom.org/cp.

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**SINGLE
ADULT
SUMMIT**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25
6:30-8:30 P.M.
LAKESIDE BAPTIST CHURCH,
BIRMINGHAM**



SINGLE ADULT LEADERSHIP PANEL:
↳ Kelly Davidson, Woodstock, Ga.
↳ Jay George, North Monroe, La.
↳ Morlee Maynard, Nashville, Tenn.

COST (MEAL AND PROGRAM): \$5 per person if registered by Tuesday, September 11, \$15 per person afterward

REGISTRATION:
www.engagingsingles.org

FOR OTHER INFORMATION, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.



Get Acquainted Day

At the Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd. in Montgomery

Thursday, September 6, 10 am - 3:30 pm
9:30 - 10 a.m. Check-in and refreshments

◦ **Meet your state missionaries** ◦ **Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission** ◦ **Tour the Baptist Building** ◦ **Spouses welcome** ◦ **Lunch provided**

Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a Get Acquainted Day

Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to www.alsbom.org/gad.

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All Things New: Senior Adult Retreat

October 15-17, Shocco Springs

This conference is a time of enrichment, encouragement and challenge for senior adults across Alabama and beyond.

Preacher: Mike Johnson, Boone's Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville

Celebration Leader: State Missionary Daniel Edmonds

Music: Robin Simpson, Boone's Chapel Baptist Church

Special Feature: Spoken For

Cost: \$155 per person (double occupancy)

Reservations: 1-800-280-1105

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

Alabama Singing Men and Women

Shocco Springs, September 13-14

Begins at 4 p.m. Thursday, ends with 12:30 p.m. lunch on Friday

Clinicians: Tom Smith, ASM, minister of music, Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, and Gayle Smith, ASW, Auburn City Schools

Cost: \$78 per person (double occupancy); \$20 deposit with reservation

Event Updates: www.alsbom.org/asm-asw

Reservations: 1-800-280-1105

For more information, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

State LIBRARY WORKSHOP

**September 17-19
Shocco Springs**

Online Info:

www.alsbom.org/churchlibrary

Reservations/Cost:

1-800-280-1105

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, jallen@alsbom.org.

Senior Adult Choir Celebrations

Beginning at 10 a.m. each day:

October 25: First Baptist Church, Birmingham; First Baptist Church, Prattville

October 26: Tillman's Corner First Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Opelika

Registration Form/Event Updates:
www.alsbom.org/seniorfest

You may also request a registration form or other information by contacting State Missionary Keith Hibbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.



**FRIDAY AND SATURDAY,
AUGUST 10-11, 2012
LAGOON PARK & FAIN PARK,
MONTGOMERY**

Baptist Men's State Softball Tournament

• 40 TEAM MAXIMUM • ROUND ROBIN TOURNAMENT • ASA-SANCTIONED • SINGLE ELIMINATION IN CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND OF 16 TEAMS. EACH TEAM WILL PLAY AT LEAST FOUR GAMES.

ENTRY FEE: \$135

FOR ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE AND AN INFORMATION PACKET, PLEASE CONTACT MINISTRY ASSISTANT MONDENE COKER AT 1-800-264-1225, EXT. 273, MCOKER@ALSBOM.ORG.

FOCUS on One Mission

REGIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL & DISCIPLESHIP LEADER TRAINING IN 2012

Sunday School & Discipleship training is coming to your region. Choose the location and date that is best for you. Go to the web pages below where you'll find a registration form, instructions about how to register and other information. Registration is \$5 per person before the early registration deadline listed on the form, \$10 per person after the deadline.

**MidWest, Northport Baptist Church, Northport
August 11, 2012**

Early registration deadline: August 9, 2012, 2 p.m.
www.alsbom.org/midwest
Contact: State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, jlbaldwin@alsbom.org,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240

**SouthEast, Cloverdale Baptist Church, Dothan
August 11, 2012**

Early registration deadline: August 9, 2012, 2 p.m.
www.alsbom.org/southeast
Contact: State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, jlbaldwin@alsbom.org,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240

**North, Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens
August 18, 2012**

Early registration deadline: August 16, 2012, 2 p.m.
www.alsbom.org/north
Contact: State Missionary Daniel Edmonds, dedmonds@alsbom.org,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285

**South, Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile
August 18, 2012**

Early registration deadline: August 16, 2012, 2 p.m.
www.alsbom.org/south
Contact: State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, jlbaldwin@alsbom.org,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240

**Metro, Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham
August 25, 2012**

Early registration deadline: August 23, 2012, 2:00 p.m.
www.alsbom.org/metro
Contact: State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, jlbaldwin@alsbom.org,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240

**NorthCentral, First Baptist Church, Cullman
August 25, 2012**

Early registration deadline: August 23, 2012, 2:00 p.m.
www.alsbom.org/northcentral
Contact: State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, jlbaldwin@alsbom.org,
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

PASTOR, DEACON/ SPOUSE RETREAT

SEPTEMBER 28-29, 2012
Shocco Springs

Shocco Springs, Friday and Saturday, September 28-29, 2012
Begins at 4 p.m. Friday, concludes at 2 p.m. Saturday.
Guest Speakers: Tom and Kim Blackaby
Reservations/Cost: 1-800-280-1105
Online Info: www.alsbom.org/pastordeaconspouseretreat
For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, dddickey@alsbom.org

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



This 16-month calendar (Sept. 2012–Dec. 2013) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events.

Limit **20 COPIES** per church. To order, please **call, fax** or **e-mail** your request to Charleen Hobbs at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 231; 334.288.2693 (fax); chobbs@alsbom.org; or **order online** at www.alsbom.org/cpg.

Be sure to **include** your name, church name, mailing address and number of church planning guides needed (up to 20).

order your 2012-2013

churchplanningguide



FOCUS on One Mission

Wednesday through Saturday,
September 19-22

River Country Campground,
Gadsden

CAMPERS ON MISSION FALL RALLY

Campers on Mission (COM) is a national fellowship of Christian campers who share their faith while they camp. Though sponsored by Southern Baptists, membership is open to Christian campers of all denominations.

The Alabama Chapter of COM sponsors a fall and spring rally and more than 20 missions projects a year.

Visitors who are interested in possible membership are welcome to attend the rally on Friday at 6:30 p.m.: a time of project reports and an ideal time to visit.



What do Campers on Mission do? Projects include state fairs, motor speedways, sewing, nursing home ministry, puppets, prayer walks, Seaman Center, association camps, church construction and disaster relief.

Who can join Campers on Mission? Any adult! Single or family, young or older. COM is family-friendly and provides a great way to experience the relaxation of vacation with the satisfaction of a mission project. It is a great pathway to become an on-mission family.

How do I become a member? Download an enrollment form from www.alabamacampersonmission.org
For other information: www.alabamacom.org

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ROYAL AMBASSADOR SOAPBOX DERBY

OCTOBER 13, 2012, IN MONTGOMERY
DOWN DEXTER AVENUE IN FRONT OF THE STATE CAPITOL

Make a car for less than \$200. Race twice a year in March and October.

For instructions, rules or other information, go online to www.alsbom.org/ra or contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.

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OUTSTANDING 2012 MISSION VOLUNTEER

The Office of Global Missions of the State Board of Missions would like to honor an Outstanding 2012 Mission Volunteer. Your help is needed.

Please think about lay people who are worthy of such recognition, and let us hear from you. We realize that there are many who could fit this requirement; however, for this purpose only one individual (or couple) will be selected.

Your recommendation will make a difference. The following information is required if a person (or couple) is to be considered:

1. The name, address, and phone number of the person (or couple) being nominated.
2. The name of the pastor, church and association with address and phone number to which he/she/they belong.
3. A list of volunteer mission service: their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Uttermost that he/she/they have participated during the past five years, including locations and dates. If the nominee(s) has not served

in at least three of the Acts 1:8 areas, please do not nominate that person.

4. Statements supporting your nomination as Outstanding 2012 Mission Volunteer. (Why you feel he/she/they should be recognized in this manner.)

5. Your signature with address, phone, church, and association.

To access the Information Sheet and Nomination Application, go online to www.alsbom.org/missionsvolunteer.

If you do not have web access, request an Information Sheet and Nomination Application by calling Ministry Assistant Virginia Gardner at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, or (334) 613-2238, vgardner@alsbom.org.

Note: No phone calls or email recommendations and/or endorsements accepted. Nominations must be received, not postmarked,

no later than September 21, 2012.



Want to know God?

By Pastor Bradley Rushing
Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan

God has sent a "Savior" into the world. But from what do we need to be "saved"? The answer is sin. God is holy. He created everything for His glory. He made man in His image so we could glorify Him through knowing Him, loving Him and enjoying Him forever.

In the beginning Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect relationship with God in the Garden of Eden. But they sinned, rebelled against God. The Bible teaches that their sin is passed down to us, thus we sin as well (1 Cor. 15:22). The Bible teaches "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) and "the wages of sin is death ..." (Rom. 6:23). Sin marks us as unrighteous, separates us from a holy God and spiritually kills us. Without Christ, we are spiritually dead.

The good news is that God has sent a Savior into the world. The coming of Jesus meets our greatest need. Jesus came to destroy sin, set sinners free and give them eternal life. As God's Son, Jesus never sinned so He didn't deserve to die. Yet He chose to. He died on a Roman cross between two criminals where God the Father rained down punishment for sin on Jesus. Jesus became sin so that those who place their faith in Him might take on His righteousness and gain eternal life.

"For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

No person is righteous by his or her own works, but there is a way to gain righteousness through placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Gal. 3:11).

How can you be saved? Confess your sins to God. Ask God to forgive your sins. Trust that Christ can and will save you based solely on His shed blood on the cross. Then seek to live every day turning from sin and pleasing God.

How can you be sure that you will be saved? Three days after His death, Jesus took back His life and rose from the grave. This is proof that He has overcome death and will give life to all who place their faith in Him.

Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago July 1962

Rural Minister of the Year: Walker Bynum, Talladega, who has served as missionary of the Coosa River Association for seven years, has been named Rural Minister of the Year for Alabama. During these seven years, he has promoted the establishment of nine new churches and six missions in the association. Bynum is among 14 ministers from the South honored by *The Progressive Farmer* and Emory University School of Theology, Atlanta.

40 Years Ago July 1972

First Campus Minister: The executive board of the Alabama Baptist State Convention has elected its first campus minister to serve in the Huntsville area. He is Ruford

B. Hodges Jr., a native of Florence, S.C. Hodges, who began his duties July 1, has served the past year as minister to internationals at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. In addition to campus assignments in the Huntsville area, he will work with Madison Baptist Association to "broaden the scope of student work" in the churches of the association.

30 Years Ago July 1982

Alabama Appointees: Three Alabamians were among 59 persons appointed to missions service by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board during its June meeting. Randy Evers, appointed with his wife Pamela, is an evangelism intern with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in Montgomery. Prior to his appointment, he was as-

sociate pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church. Terri Willis, a native of Sylacauga, is a church planter apprentice in Dallas, Texas. Formerly, she was a speech therapist in Talladega.

20 Years Ago July 1992

Program Directors Named: Samford University has named two new program directors. Wallace A.C. Williams, executive director of the Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptist State Convention, has been appointed as inaugural director of the proposed doctor of ministry program at Samford's Beeson Divinity School. Brenda Sanders, director of Christian life at Houston Baptist University, has been named

director of student ministries.

10 Years Ago July 2002

NYC Policeman Visits: New York City police officer Brian O'Neill shared his thoughts on patriotism and 9/11 during pre-July 4 services at Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham. O'Neill is an 18-year veteran of the New York City Police Department and worked at Ground Zero. His visit was made possible through a partnership between Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) and Metropolitan Baptist Association in New York. BBA congregational consultant Butch Henderson said a goal of the partnership is to use each other's strengths to better minister to people.

Alabama Cooperative Program Gifts

Alabama Baptist Giving

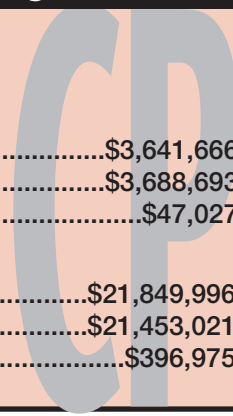
Year to Date through June 30, 2012

JUNE

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| CP Challenge Budget Goal | \$3,641,666 |
| CP Challenge Budget Gifts | \$3,688,693 |
| Over Goal for Month..... | \$47,027 |

YEAR TO DATE

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| CP Challenge Budget Goal | \$21,849,996 |
| CP Challenge Budget Gifts | \$21,453,021 |
| Under Goal for Year | \$396,975 |



'Ripe missions field' in England

(continued from page 3)

legally and sentimentally part of their community and family. Weddings, funerals, the baptisms of their children — all are theirs by law, regardless of their personal spiritual state.

It is a ripe missions field that has shown much fruit, Baker said.

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

The vicar, or parish priest, at her church often speaks to the congregation about the liturgy and doctrine ingrained in the Church of England, explaining its personal spiritual relevance and connection to Christ.

"When you go back to the real history of the church, there's such a beautiful foundation there," Baker said. "The Church of England has its roots deep, but the government is moving further and further from the truth, walking away from our Christian heritage. We need a boldness and conviction to stand up for the truth and not water down the gospel."

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF *THE ALABAMA BAPTIST*, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR EMAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Southern Baptist church in Jackson, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God's man for the full-time position of senior pastor. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 685, Jackson, AL 36545.

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

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

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

PART-TIME MINISTER TO YOUTH: Holt Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is seeking a part-time minister of youth. Please email

resumes to: rmitchell@holtbaptistchurch.org, or send via postal mail to: Holt Baptist Church, 3101 Alabama Avenue NE, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404.

OTHER POSITIONS

INDEPENDENT SALES ASSOCIATE CONTRACTOR: The 170-year-old *Alabama Baptist* is an award-winning statewide weekly newspaper with more than 200,000 readers. Baptists comprise the largest Christian denomination in Alabama with membership of more than a million. *The Alabama Baptist* is seeking contract sales people with the ability to develop advertising partnerships with businesses and organizations interested in reaching the key demographics of our readers and growing their business. As an independent sales associate contractor, you would work from your home office with no territory restrictions. *The Alabama Baptist*, Inc. provides a unique working environment. We are partners with the churches of the Alabama Baptist State Convention working together for the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each employee is expected to manage his/her personal and professional life in accordance with this relationship and consistent with the traditions of *The Alabama Baptist*. Send resumes and inquiries to: bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

BUSINESS

MEDIA TRANSFER: Cassette and video tapes deteriorate over time. Let us put your sermons, lectures, music, home movies,

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Faith in action

Student Life camp inspires youth to serve

Talladega and other towns near Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center received a good dose of church youth during late May and early June.

Four weeks of Student Life Mission Camp meant around 850 students from 36 churches had opportunities to serve the community in more than 50 sites around the area.

During the week at Student Life Camp students experience small group Bible studies, church group time, camp-wide worship services and, depending on the type of camp they attend, either team-building recreation or service-type opportunities out in the community.

"Groups that serve at various sites in the community are learning to put their faith into action, set aside selfish desires and show the gospel on display through their words and deeds," said Melissa Nicholson, Student Life mission project coordinator.

Building relationships

The church youth groups hosted backyard Bible clubs, helped with yard work, organized food pantries and worked in other ways to build relationships.

Brenda Hunt, a youth leader from New Harmony Baptist Church, DeFuniak Springs, Fla., brought a group of high school students to serve and grow while at the camp.

The students worked with Red Door Kitchen, an organization that feeds individuals who are needy or homebound, and helped deliver



Photo courtesy of Shocco Springs Student Life Mission Camp students minister near Talladega.

meals and minister to those who needed encouragement.

"The students had a great time," Hunt said. "They were made aware of needs that they hadn't thought about before and began to think of ways we can help in our own community and church."

One of the students from New Harmony Baptist also made a decision to follow Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Another church group assisting at Red Door Kitchen was from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

The students organized the food pantry, cleaned the facility and helped with meal delivery. Before delivering the meals, students wrote Luke 6:21 on each box — "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied."

Wendy Westerhouse, president of Red Door Kitchen and sales and marketing associate for Shocco Springs, said, "The ministry of the Red Door Kitchen is extremely grateful for the work of the students in June. They helped with our facility and then got to see the recipients of meals firsthand in delivering to the homebound. Their attitude and enthusiasm was contagious and an encouragement to our regular volunteers."

The students from Brook Hills also spent time at Presbyterian Home for Children, which is a home for children whose behavioral or educational needs are not being met.

Group leader Mark Bishop noted how exciting it was to see how much fun his group had by simply engaging in conversations with children who do not have many friends.

"They all got along so well and I'm very proud for the effort my group put forth," he said.

After becoming more aware of the people around them who are less fortunate, student group after student group said they were not only more grateful for the things they have at home, but they also were excited to become more involved in their own communities and help those in need.

"Christ has done so much for us and this was a good way for us to serve Him in return," said student Austin Brokaw, a member of Brook Hills. (Shocco)

Prayer important part of career ministry

(continued from page 1)

Richardson believes the success of the Job Concern Ministry is due in large part to the prayer support it receives from the church.

"About 50 percent of the people who have come to us are now working, but we don't want any credit for that," Richardson said. "We have an active group of men who support our ministry in prayer, both individually and as a group, and we think that has more to do with these folks finding employment than anything we can do."

Baker said that unlike government agencies, churches can offer the hope of Christ to those who are struggling with employment issues.

"Our training sessions and presentations don't pound upon God and Christ or have an invitation at the end, but we don't shy away from the fact that God is in charge," Baker said. "We pray for guidance and for specific needs all the time, and if someone wants to know more about Jesus, we're ever so happy to share."

Jenna Murphy, public information officer for the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, said the state offers many resources

to job seekers, as well as to community organizations that want to provide career services. The state manages an employment website, www.joblink.alabama.gov, where job seekers can upload a current resumé and search the database of more than 13,000 available jobs. The site also contains contact information for the 45 assistance centers in the Alabama Career Center System.

Murphy said Alabama Career Center staff members provide a va-

riety of employment services, from creating a resumé to transferring military skills into civilian terms. Each of these locations provides computer access as well as assistance with navigating the Joblink website.

Churches interested in hosting a career fair may contact their local career center for help, or to schedule the Mobile Career Center, which is outfitted with 15 computers and staff members who can provide career advice and help. ☛

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Pastor Jim Cooley
*First Baptist Church,
Haleyville*

Our Alabama Baptist paper is one of the best resources available that enables us as Alabama Baptists to embrace and celebrate the special identity we share. For most of my adult life it has been my primary means of discovering what is happening in Baptist life internationally, nationally, on a state level and among our local churches. *The Alabama Baptist* provides the kind of information we need to be effective and informed believers.

I appreciate how various elements of the paper work together to challenge our thinking and strengthen our faith. Dr. Terry's editorials of-

fer provocative insights and challenge us to consider how our faith directs our thinking about theological, cultural and social issues that impact our lives. The news articles provide information we need to be informed and thoughtful Baptist believers. Special features within the paper tell us about what is taking place in and among Alabama

Baptist churches and associations.

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have discovered a personal and often whimsical perspective on life and faith through the eyes of a thoughtful observer.

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- Be as concise as possible

Morality in Media works to block porn domains

Morality in Media is working to block new Internet pornography domains months after the initiation of the .xxx portal, which was promoted as a central adult gateway to Internet porn.

At issue is an application .xxx-domain owner ICM Registry has made to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers for approval of three additional pornography domains: .sex, .porn and .adult.

Morality in Media is asking the public to block approval of these domains that would only increase the number of porn sites, which

have been proven harmful to children, adults and families.

"What we need to do is overwhelm the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers with complaints about the new porn domains so that it calls attention to the problem with them and the fact that we don't need more porn on the Internet, which is all this will be," said Patrick Trueman, Morality in Media president and former chief of the U.S. Department of Justice's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. "We are working today, in fact, on our current campaign to get organiza-

tions and individuals to file objections to these new domains .sex, .adult and .porn."

Gathering signatures

Morality in Media is contacting such groups as Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, the Alliance Defending Freedom and others and has posted on its website www.pornharms.com, a petition gathering signatures against IMC Registry's application.

The public has until Aug. 12 to file complaints with ICANN, an international agency.

Filing a complaint with ICANN requires registration on the ICANN website, which Trueman described as a ploy to discourage participation.

The process takes about five minutes.

"Keep in mind ICM Registry is going to try to get people to file supporting comments for this, as though we need more porn. There's always a lot of people supporting that position," Trueman said. "So we can win it if we get the people."

He encourages the public to file complaints at www.waronillegalpornography.com.

"America is already suffering an untreated pandemic of harm from pornography and we need less, not more, pornography," Trueman said. "Research demonstrates that harms from pornography include damage to brain function, lifelong addictions for both children and adults, isolation and depression, family dysfunction and divorce, increased demand for child pornography and child sexual abuse, increased prostitution and sex trafficking, violence against women, financial instability and the list continues." (BP)



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Letters to the Editor

PULLING 'BLIND SIDE'

Your news item in the July 19 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* related to the action of LifeWay pulling the popular DVD, "The Blind Side," from its shelves certainly brought home to me a personal disappointment related to the so-called "purification" of our denominational bookstore.

I am a writer. While serving overseas for 15 years with the then Foreign Mission Board (now IMB) I wrote extensively for numerous publications, including *The Commission*, and almost all of the missions publications from national WMU in Birmingham. At the request of the Board I also authored a missions study book and later had books published by Broadman and New Hope, as well as a book published by Smyth & Helwys.

During my years with the Georgia Baptist Convention I continued to write for *Royal Service*; more recently I have been a regular writer for a local Christian magazine and have been published in *Christianity Today* as well as in *Reach Out*, a publication of Columbia International Seminary.

I say all of that to set my denominational and Christian background as a writer. At the suggestion of a friend I contributed stories to the popular *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. I was delighted when my stories were selected for not one, but two of their publications: *The Cancer Book* and, later, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: True Love*.

When I went to our local LifeWay bookstore to alert them to this fact so my many friends and family could purchase the books, I was told, "We no longer carry the *Chicken Soup* books." They could not tell me why, so I came home and called LifeWay's corporate office. The response they gave: "Not all of the writers in those books are Christians."

I cannot tell you how many

people told me they had gone to LifeWay to buy copies only to learn they did not carry the books. As it turned out, the books were/are available at Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Target and Walmart.

My stories told of God's grace during the illness and death of my husband: God's amazing love as he lived — and died — with cancer (*The Cancer Book*); and of God's provision, guidance and direction in my second marriage to a widower who had also been a missionary (*True Love*).

Reading the article in *The Alabama Baptist* at least lets me know why my more recent publications in the "impure" *Chicken Soup* books were not worthy to be sold by our stores. I perused the bookshelves and saw numerous books by those who do not hold our theological views, but I suppose they passed the purity test. It seems to me that Southern Baptists are moving into the greatest period of exclusiveness ever — while a lost world just looks on.

Elaine Herrin Onley
Dothan, Ala.



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EASILY CONDEMNED

I am dismayed and disappointed that some of my fellow Christians so readily condemned Dr. Cecil Taylor for an error that was not his! (See July 12 issue, page 3.)

Why did they not contact Dr. Taylor for an explanation? Jesus told us not to judge or we would be judged in the same way. I hope that those who signed the petition will send Dr. Taylor another petition asking his forgiveness.

The "Explore the Bible" commentary by Dr. Taylor has been a blessing to me. He is well qualified to teach in any Baptist college and I sincerely hope that he will continue to write for *The Alabama Baptist*.

I am in the process of moving from Alabama to Kentucky but I will continue to get *The Alabama Baptist*. Thank you for this publication.

Joyce Powell
Cadiz, Ky.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 29

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson Dean and Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

FAMILY FEUD

Judges 9:1-9, 14-15, 56-57

When Gideon (Jerubbaal) died, a leadership vacuum existed. Members of his family vied for responsibility, leading to the death of many. Rather than working together for the good of the family and the tribes, they allowed their self-centered agendas to affect a nation.

Beware of Manipulation (1-6)

Following the death of Gideon, the tribes of Israel pursued idolatry as before. They established Baal worship as their priority, bowing to Baal-berith ("lord of the covenant," 8:33). Focus on man-centered sexual ritual made them susceptible to manipulation.

Abimelech argued that it would be better to have a centralized government and that singular authority is of greater benefit than the wisdom of many. In making his case, he went to the portion of his family that was most sympathetic to his cause. Abimelech had been born to a nanny, one of the maids in Gideon's household, and was held in low regard by the rest of his family. He gathered a group of thugs and all Abimelech's half-brothers, except Jotham, were executed. He was then proclaimed king at Shechem.

Throughout the course of biblical history, ruthless men have followed these same manipulative practices. Ahab manipulated a group against Naboth. Medo-Persian officials manipulated Darius against Daniel. Haman manipulated Xerxes against the Jews, suggesting that they were a threat to national security. Christians must be careful not to allow persuasive individuals to lead believers astray.

Choose Service (7-9)

Unlike Abimelech, Jotham was an honorable man. He recognized that his half-brother had deceived the people of Shechem. They needed to know the truth, so he shouted it from the mountaintop. Literally, Jotham called upon the people to listen to him. Once they heard the truth and repented of their crime as accessories to Abimelech's massacre, God would listen to them. By speaking truth to them, he was serving the people and serving God.

Revealing deceit and announcing truth come at a cost. After his Gerizim speech, Jotham went into hiding, never to be mentioned again until the death of Abimelech (9:57).

Beware of False Security (14-15)

Jotham employed a method of narrative story-telling common among primarily oral cultures. Often the village wise man offers insight into human nature through stories about animals.

In this instance, Jotham used trees as his characters, with each subsequent tree offering less fruitful benefits than the ones before: an olive tree, a fig tree, a grapevine, and finally a thorn bush. Gideon was the olive tree with honor enough to reject becoming king. Abimelech, on the other hand, was the thorn bush, whose only fruit was bloodshed.

This speech may remind readers of Mark Antony's speech in "Julius Caesar" by Shakespeare. Entrusting their lives to murdering men, both the Romans and the men of Shechem built a false sense of security. Rather than leaning on the everlasting arms of the merciful God, they were being held sway by men with bloodstained hands. In time the people of Shechem would regret their choice to appoint Abimelech as king.

Beware of Selfish Ambition (56-57)

The rise and fall of Abimelech are marked with selfishness, a lust for control and death. From his introduction following the death of his father to the record of his own demise, Abimelech epitomizes the direction of the culture in the period of the judges. He lived for himself and he died for himself. Abimelech was a man driven by ambition.

Christians today must be careful not to fall into the same trap. Each must ask, "What is my ambition?" The apostle Paul recorded that it was his ambition to take the gospel where the very name of Christ had not been proclaimed (Rom. 15:20). Francis Xavier wrote to a seminary professor, challenging his friend to "tell the students to give up their small ambitions, and come eastward to preach the gospel of Christ." What greater ambition can there be for a disciple of Christ?

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

CONFIDENT

**Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:14-17;
2 Corinthians 5:1-5**

John Calvin insisted that "assurance of salvation was of the essence of faith." Calvin believed that "Christ was the mirror of our election."

This meant that rather than encouraging people to look inwardly, in perpetual self-examination of their spiritual progress as a proof of the reality of their relationship with God, we should focus all our attention on Jesus Christ.

Confident in My Redemption (Eph. 1:13-14)

This is why Paul is so confident in Ephesians 1 that we are "chosen" and "predestined" (1:11).

It is because we heard and believed the message of the gospel and were "marked with a seal of the promised Holy Spirit ... the pledge of our inheritance." The seal is the assurance of ownership.

In a similar way, the Holy Spirit is given to us to assure us of the love of God toward us.

He reminds us that salvation is all of God's grace, not dependent on our own human effort but on God's work in sending His Son to redeem us.

Another image of the seal is a wedding ring worn on the left hand to remind spouses of the marriage relationship.

It reminds us of the covenant between a husband and a wife that resembles, but falls far short of, the eternal relationship of love between God and His people.

Confident in My Relationship (Rom. 8:14-17)

The writer Anne Lamott speaks of the simplicity of her life of faith when she says that her two basic prayers are "Help, help, help" and "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

In Romans Paul returns to this theme of assurance and speaks of the closeness

between God and His people through the ministry of the Spirit, who helps us in our weakness. He makes us aware that we are the children of God and teaches us to cry, "Abba."

The Spirit "bears witness with our spirits." Intimacy with God is expressed by being able to pray "Abba."

This is further imprinted on our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the bond of love between the Father and the Son and the bond of loving assurance between the believer and God.

Confident in My Reward (2 Cor. 5:1-5)

The final confidence that Paul speaks about is the assurance of the hope we anticipate in heaven, our inheritance.

Paul never believed the Christian hope was merely that of the soul returning to God. Paul was convinced that at the heart of Christian hope was the resurrection of the body.

When this "earthly tent" is dismantled at death we will receive a new body, a body of resurrection, when we are "further clothed" and our mortality is "swallowed up" in the new life of the eternal Kingdom.

Theologian Karl Barth reminded us "the goal of human life is not death but resurrection" and a place in the new creation in which God's presence is enjoyed through an encounter in the fellowship of the divine life.

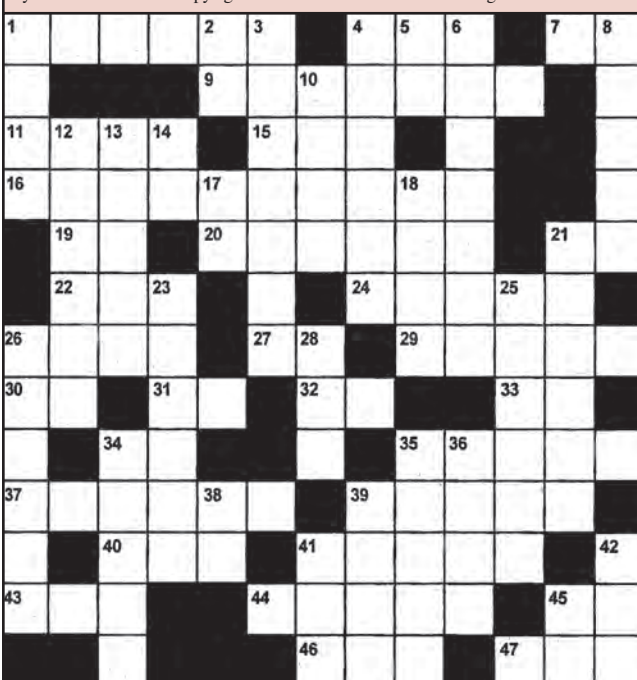
This will not be merely individualistic, but a corporate experience: the whole body of Christ, indeed the whole creation, will be renewed in self-giving relationships.

Over the last year, reflecting on a serious illness, I was never more assured of the love of God here and now and never doubted the hope that lay ahead of me.

However, reflecting on the illness also led me to be more conscious of the gift of each day and the opportunities each day offers to spend time with family and friends and to live as well as I can, upheld by the grace of a triune God who eternally goes out of Himself for the sake of others in unrestrained generosity.

Christian Crossword

By Faith Wade Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
- Filthy conversation of the _____. (2 Pet. 2:7)
 - Pekod, and Shoa, and _____. (Ezek. 23:23)
 - New Testament. (abbr.)
 - His _____ is in the law. (Ps. 1:2)
 - _____ have we confidence toward God. (1 John 3:21)
 - Feline.
 - Be not, as the _____. (Matt. 6:16)
 - Hush.
 - When the wicked _____. (Prov. 11:10)
 - Let _____ many servants. (1 Tim. 6:1)
 - _____ not among thorns. (Jer. 4:3)
 - The son of _____, which was the son of Mattathias. (Luke 3:26)
 - Gaddiel the son of _____. (Num. 13:10)
 - Compass direction.
 - Bathsheba's first husband. (2 Sam. 11:3)
 - Not down.
 - Negative.

- Joshua sent men from Jericho to _____. (Josh. 7:2)
- Mister. (abbr.)
- Newspaper want _____. (Gen. 29:10)
- Rachel and Leah's father. (Gen. 29:10)
- Lord, by thy _____. (Ps. 30:7)
- By the hill of _____. (Judg. 7:1)
- And ye are not your _____. (1 Cor. 6:19)
- In _____ with God and men. (Luke 2:52 NAS)
- Nathan ... and Shimei, and _____. (1 Kings 1:8)
- _____, and ye clothed me. (Matt. 25:36)
- You and I. (Gen. 25:25)
- Noah's boat.
- Javan, Elishah, and Tarshish, _____. (Gen. 10:4)
- The kingdom of _____ in Bashan. (Deut. 3:4)
- _____ was over the household. (1 Kings 4:6)
- His dwelling among the _____. (Mark 5:3)
- A lion's den.
- Take a bunch of _____. (Ex. 12:22)
- He made the _____ of gold. (Ex. 39:2)
- Opposite of yes.
- Computer Printer. (abbr.)
- Jacob's brother. (Gen. 25:2-26)
- Benjamin's third child. (1 Chron. 8:1)
- And there sat in a _____. (Acts 20:9)
- Buy _____ and hewed stone. (2 Kings 12:12)
- _____ the little children to come unto me. (Mark 10:14)
- I am the _____. (John 15:6)
- _____ it, pass not by it. (Prov. 4:15)
- For God so _____. (John 3:16)
- Of _____, the family of the Arodites. (Num. 26:17)
- United Nations. (abbr.)
- Thou shall not _____ unto thee. (Ex. 20:4)
- Not near.
- _____, and it shall be given. (Matt. 7:7)
- Abraham's hometown. (Gen. 11:31)



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Suit against Kentucky children's home to proceed

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Kentucky taxpayers, including a former longtime professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, renewed a legal challenge to taxpayer funding of a Baptist home that fired a staff member in 1998 after learning she is a lesbian.

Judge Charles Simpson III of the U.S. District Court of Western Kentucky said July 5 that Alicia Pedreira, a former case worker at Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, now known as Sunrise Children's Services, and three other plaintiffs could file a second amended complaint that her firing for religious reasons from a publicly funded position violated the First Amendment ban on government establishment of religion. The other plaintiffs include Paul Simmons, an ordained Baptist who taught at the seminary in Louisville for 23 years and former board member of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Pedreira and Simmons, along with Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary professor Johanna W.H. Van Wuk-Bos and Unitarian Universalist minister Elwood Sturtevant, claim Kentucky's practice of providing government funds to finance positions that are filled according to religious tenets "constitutes evidence of a violation of the Establishment Clause."

They are asking the courts to declare unconstitutional the Commonwealth's funding of "pervasively religious entities" without any restrictions or safeguards against those funds being used for religious indoctrination.

Ohio Baptist church excommunicated for affirming gays

COLUMBUS, Ohio — An American Baptist church in Ohio has been excommunicated from its association and state region after going on record as welcoming and affirming gays.

Tommy Faris, pastor of University Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio, said the church has received a letter from the Columbus Baptist Association informing them they have been removed from fellowship.

Faris said University Baptist intends to remain a member of American Baptist Churches, USA (ABCUSA). The ABCUSA affiliation can continue on an ad hoc basis for up to 18 months, and in the meantime the church will seek to relate to the national body through the American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region in New York, one of several American Baptist regions open to congregations forced out of other ABCUSA affiliates over theological differences.

In 1992 the ABCUSA General Board passed a resolution affirming "that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching."

Prison sentences handed down in 'bingo' bribery case

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson handed down sentences July 16 to three men involved in a bingo legislation vote-buying scheme.

According to reports, Country Crossing developer Ronnie Gilley was sentenced to six years and eight months in prison; his lobbyist Jarrod Massey was sentenced to five years and five months; and former state Rep. Terry Spicer, D-Elba, was sentenced to four years and nine months.

Gilley must also forfeit \$200,000 to the government, according to reports. The judge ordered Massey to pay a \$20,000 fine and Spicer must pay a \$40,000 fine.

Both Gilley and Massey had pleaded guilty to charges of bribery and conspiracy, which involved bribing legislators for pro-gambling legislation votes. Spicer had admitted to receiving

bribes from the two men when he served as a legislator.

The Birmingham News reported the sentences were handed down following an emotional day of testimony and that the three men expressed remorse for their crimes. "I'm ashamed of myself. I'm not going to sit up here and make up excuses," said Gilley during the hearing, according to *The News*.

The Associated Press reported that federal prosecutors had recommended Gilley spend close to 11 years in prison. They recommended that Massey spend a little more than 11 years in prison and Spicer about five years.

The three men remain free on bond and must report to prison Aug. 27.

To read the background of this case and the implications for the state, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org. (TAB)



BP photo

Laura Story

"It really was just my own process of coming to terms with the fact that sometimes God allows things in this life that we don't understand. They may look like roadblocks in our lives, but when we step back, trying to find the perspective, [we] see them as possible means for us growing in our faith, possible means for God showing us something about Himself or something about ourselves that we wouldn't see any other way."

Laura Story
Christian singer-songwriter

'Blessings' beyond awards

Singer-songwriter Story finds healing, peace with hardship

Blessings" is more than just a song that has garnered several key awards for Christian singer-songwriter Laura Story; it is her own tale of finding healing and peace with hardship.

Story's song came from her own personal struggle understanding God's plan after learning that her husband had a brain tumor early in their marriage. "Blessings," which she wrote about two years ago, was her way of working through the difficulties in her life and learning that God does not always immediately come to the rescue. Her husband survived but the experience was difficult.

"It really was just my own process of coming to terms with the fact that sometimes God allows things in this life that we don't understand," Story said. "They may look like roadblocks in our lives, but when we step back, trying to find the perspective, [we] see them as possible means for us growing in our faith, possible means for God showing us something about Himself or something about ourselves that we wouldn't see any other way."

The honors Story received in recent months for her song "Blessings" and her album of the same name include:

- ▶ Top Christian song at the Billboard Music Awards
- ▶ A Grammy for Best Contemporary Christian Song
- ▶ Song of the Year, Pop/Contemporary Song of the Year, Pop/Contemporary Album of the Year and Songwriter of the Year at the Dove Awards

In addition to her current album, Story wrote the popular song "Indescribable" sung by Chris Tomlin. Although Story said she — like most other Christian artists — does not do her work for awards, she noted that she is glad her story of struggle was shared with others through several notable venues.

"As far as the awards of this world, it has been helpful as far as getting the message out about God's work in my life," she said. "So we celebrate that more than we do any metallic object I might be handed on a stage. It's certainly so much more about wanting God to take the platform and His message being known in our lives."

The song's message is not just a positive spin on life's hardships, however. Story said "Blessings" delves into the idea that sometimes health, wealth or prosperity is not what God wants for His followers. She asks: "What if there are character things that He wants to do in our hearts that are more valuable than any of the riches that this life can offer us?"

In addition to being a singer-songwriter, Story is a worship leader at Perimeter Church, Atlanta. Most Sundays Story leads worship there, but she said she is thankful Perimeter also allows her to minister at other churches and get a sense of the atmosphere of the larger church.

"I definitely think the local church is still God's plan A," she said. "Anything I can do to encourage my local church and pour in here but also encourage other people in their local churches, that's what I really feel called to do." Story is doing just that, investing in her local church while also going on the road with her husband and band once or twice a week to encourage other believers across the nation.

Story published a 30-day devotional — also titled "Blessings" — based on the award-winning song. She also is planning to record a new CD this fall and join a tour in December called 12 Gifts.

But those are not the biggest of her upcoming plans. Story and her husband are expecting their first child later this year.

"We're excited and just grateful that God gives us so many opportunities just to minister and grateful He's blessing us with a baby to add to our dream, add to our story," she said. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Baptist Convention

Jack and Wilma Simmons share a Bible presentation with children in the 'mobile chapel' they converted from a school bus.

Transforming lives

By Shirley Cox
Kentucky Baptist Convention

By trailer, by bus, Simmonses take gospel on road

Jack and Wilma Simmons first heard God's call to missions more than 20 years ago when they met an associational missionary who told them about the needs in Indiana.

"After looking over the area for a time and trying to get something started, it seemed we just couldn't get it done," Jack Simmons said. Eventually they realized God was calling them back to Wilma Simmons' Kentucky hometown, West Point.

With help from the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the Simmonses purchased a mobile home to use as a meeting place. After floods destroyed the first two trailers, a third one was donated by Ron Morgan, a member of Immanuel Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky.

The Simmonses also converted a school bus into a "mobile chapel" so they could minister to residents of two other mobile home communities in the area.

Creative presentation

The children's program includes Bible stories, crafts and refreshments. Services that include adults are held in the evenings and on Sunday morning.

Wilma Simmons prepares and shares Bible presentations with the children who attend the bus ministry, and she prepares a craft project for all three mission points each week.

"I use flannel graph stories, magic and science-related items to present a Bible lesson. The children who attend our bus ministry range in age from preschoolers to teenagers. They do not relate well to just listening to a Bible story since most of them have never heard one."

Wilma Simmons said a volunteer helps with the children's program at the West Point Mission.

"When the children first attend, sometimes they won't share or they hit each other or throw things all over the floor without picking them up," Wilma Simmons said. "After a while, they begin to share with each other and even start to help me clean up."

Even without a traditional church facility, the Sim-

monses have become pastoral leaders of their flocks.

"We also minister by providing food, performing weddings and funerals and making hospital visits," Jack Simmons said. "Each Christmas, we distribute over 400 shoebox gifts."

The couple said that as they serve, they watch God use their efforts to transform lives.

"When Dallas began coming to the chapel at West Point, he was failing school and was always in trouble," Jack Simmons said. "After a while, he began listening and reading the Bible. Finally he committed his life to Christ. Before long, Dallas was on the honor roll and was one of the best behaved kids in our meetings."

Jack Simmons also watched God change the life of a man who had a reputation of being the meanest, toughest person in town.

"It was said people walked on the other side of the street when they saw Danny coming because they were afraid of him," Jack Simmons said. "Somehow we made friends with him and he asked me to perform his wedding. His children came to the chapel, but we could never get him to attend anything."

After Jack Simmons visited Danny for months to talk about the Bible, Danny accepted Christ. "He did a complete turnaround," Jack Simmons said. "He became the most gentle, loving person. His brother later became a Christian because of his testimony."

In addition to their work at the three mission points, Jack Simmons farms and pastors a small rural church. "I continue to serve the Lord through ministry because I don't believe God expects us to quit just because we get older," he explained. "Don't forget, Moses was 80 years old when God called him."

The Simmonses are among dozens of Mission Service Corps (MSC) missionaries serving in Kentucky. MSC missionaries are self-funded servants who assist churches, local Baptist associations and individual ministries. For information about MSC, call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 416. (KBC)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Confidence in organized religion reaches new low

OMAHA, Neb. — Americans' confidence in organized religion, slowly but steadily declining since the 1970s, slipped to a new low in the latest survey, the Gallup Organization reported.

Today only 44 percent of Americans have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in "the church or organized religion," Gallup said. It was 68 percent in the mid-1970s.

Pollsters did not name any church or religion in particular, letting respondents define that as they wished, the organization said.

Most Protestants (56 percent) expressed confidence in the church, but only a minority (46 percent) of Catholics did.

But Lydia Saad, Gallup senior editor, pointed out that the question deals with churches and organized religion. Americans are still generally a very religious people, although increasingly on their own terms.

In 2007 a poll by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found only about one in six respondents said religion was "not too" or "not at all" important in their lives.

Only 5 percent said they did not believe in God or a universal spirit. Saad said in 1975, "the church or organized religion" was the highest-rated of the 16 institutions Gallup asked about.

It still ranks fourth. The top three institutions Americans have most confidence in are, in order, the military, small business and the police.

The survey included 1,004 adults and was taken June 7-10, Gallup said.

Minnesota Atheists to sponsor minor league baseball event

ST. PAUL, Minn. — For one hot August night, the St. Paul Saints, a Minnesota minor league baseball team, will become the "Mr. Paul Aints" in a game sponsored by a local atheist group.

The letter "S" in all Saints signs and logos around the stadium will be covered, and there are planned references to Bigfoot, UFOs and other targets of the skeptical community, team officials said.

"We want to show that atheists can have fun," said August Berkshire, president of Minnesota Atheists, which is sponsoring the event with American Atheists a day before its regional conference in downtown St. Paul.

"We picked the name not as a political statement, but just as something that was fun," Berkshire said. "We thought everybody ain't got a belief in something so it was a word everybody could relate to. Obviously, we ain't got a belief in God."

The Saints have hosted several religiously themed events before, including Christian concerts and a Jewish Heritage Night. It would be "hypocritical" to tell the atheists no, a team official said.

Bachmann, legislators address security concerns

WASHINGTON — Accusations by Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., that an Islamist group has infiltrated the U.S. government are drawing fierce criticism from fellow lawmakers and religious groups.

Bachmann and four other GOP legislators have sent letters to five government agencies citing "serious security concerns" about what Bachmann has called a "deep penetration in the halls of our United States government" by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Bachmann also accused Huma Abedin, an aide to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and former Rep. Anthony Weiner's wife, of having family connections to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., defended Abedin. "These attacks on Huma have no logic, no basis and no merit, and they need to stop now," he said in a Senate speech on July 18.

Bachmann's letters cite a report by Frank Gaffney, a conservative who has accused President Obama of "embracing the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood."

Boy Scouts of America upholds no-homosexual policy

NASHVILLE — After a confidential two-year review, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is upholding its policy to exclude homosexuals from membership and leadership posts in the group, despite activists' cries for change.

"The vast majority of the parents of youth we serve value their rights to address issues of same-sex orientation within their family, with spiritual advisers and at the appropriate time and in the right setting," Bob Mazzuca, BSA chief scout executive, said in a BSA press release. "While a majority of our membership agrees with our policy, we fully understand that no single policy will accommodate the many diverse views among our membership or society."

BSA noted "there will be no further action" on the matter.