



## INSIDE



**Movie theater massacre: Baptists respond to Aurora**

◆ Pages 4-5



**Religious groups vie for Internet domain names as web address extensions expand**

◆ Page 7



**Alabama National Guard chaplain conducts one-of-a-kind baptism**

◆ Page 10

# an Amazing Race

By Brittney Knox  
Intern, The Alabama Baptist



Kristen Zahorscak (center) and other youth from FBC Glencoe crawl under a string bed during one stage of an obstacle course.

Photo by Trent Penny

## Gadsden-area event challenges Alabama Baptist youth spiritually, physically

**T**he Amazing Race: Extreme Faith Edition was no ordinary race. Designed to challenge participants spiritually as well as physically,

Embark Ministries hosted the event July 21 in the Gadsden area.

The 11 participating church groups dressed in their team's color and set out on their journey in hopes of being named this year's winner with the fastest times. The grand prize included a trophy, a \$500 gift certificate toward a youth event hosted by Embark Ministries and, of course, the pride.

Yells of excitement paired with shouts of encouragement filled the air near a lake in Gadsden as students pushed through a swim challenge that called for team members to transport 40 Legos, one at a time, from a small bay across the lake back to the dock in the fastest time.

Brianna Warsham, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, in Etowah Baptist Association, was

proud of her team's efforts in the swim challenge.

"I had a lot of fun completing the challenge," Warsham said. "I loved the challenges last year when I participated and am glad I got the chance to do it again this year."

In addition to the swim challenge, teams participated in ropes course activities, including zip lining; a memorization challenge, where students with limited time recalled images pictured on a card; a youth minister challenge in which teams encouraged their leaders through physically demanding obstacles; and a ministry challenge, where students got couples in area shopping centers to take pictures with a sign that displayed a spiritual message.

"Each challenge was designed to teach the students about something they would experience in their Christian walk," said Vista McDuffie, director of Embark Ministries. "For example, the memorization challenge relayed the message to students that we have to know God's Word to be able to give an account at any time."

Among the participants was Tyler Elliott of Bellevue Baptist who found this event to be the perfect combination of fun and the opportunity to grow in Christ.

Elliott spoke highly of McDuffie and shared that he preached the sermon that led him to follow Christ.

Elliott, 19, recalls walking down the church aisle when he was 15 after hearing McDuffie's sermon.

"Anytime I can help bring [people] to Christ, it feels great," McDuffie said.

While there was only one prize for the race winner, all participants were blessed with the message at the worship rally held at Cross Point Community Church, Gadsden. Students heard Spirit-filled selections from Intersect Worship band and a message from McDuffie that urged them to run God's race without fear, with passion and with endurance.

Also taking place at the worship rally was the announcement of this

year's winner — Keener Baptist Church, Attala, in Etowah Baptist Association. Teresa Gore, youth pastor for Keener Baptist, said they are a small church that loves Christ "a whole lot."

"We are definitely excited to win and glad to have been a part of this," she said.

This was the second year for the competition, and it has already more than doubled in participation — 120 students in 2011 and 300 students this year.

The Amazing Race is one of many events hosted by Embark Ministries. For more information, visit [www.embarkministries.com](http://www.embarkministries.com). ☞



Photo by Trent Penny

Dustin Thomas of Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, swims his leg of a water challenge during the event July 21.

# COMMENT

## Everyone Deserves Religious Liberty

In one sense it was an important historical anniversary. In another it was a desperate plea for support against the slaughter of Christians because they dared to confess “Jesus is Lord.”

This year marks the 400th anniversary of Thomas Helwys’ famous plea for universal religious freedom. In his book “A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity,” published in 1612, Helwys wrote the first declaration of religious freedom for all published in the English language.

He wrote to King James I (of the King James Bible) saying, “The King is a mortal man, and not God, therefore has no power over the immortal souls of subjects, to make laws and ordinances for them, and to set spiritual lords over them. If the king have authority to make spiritual lords and laws, then he is an immortal God and not a mortal man.”

Helwys continued, “If the king’s people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all human laws made by the king, our lord the king can require no more. For men’s religion to God is between God and themselves. The king shall not answer for it. Neither may the king judge between God and men. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.”

For daring to question the king’s right to govern men’s souls, Helwys was thrown into Newgate Prison, where he died about 1616.

### Freedom remains elusive

Baptist leaders from around the world meeting in Santiago, Chile, for the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) annual gathering took time July 3, 2012, to recall Baptists’ historical commitment to religious freedom, not just for ourselves but for all people everywhere — “heretic, Turk, Jew or whatsoever.”

But religious freedom remains elusive for much of the world’s population. A presentation to the BWA’s Religious Liberty Commission on which this writer serves reported nearly 70 percent of the world’s 6.9 billion people live in countries with high restrictions on religion. The study was done by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life.

Among the world’s 25 most populous countries, Pew found restriction on religion substantially increased in eight during the past year and did not substantially decrease in any.

Restrictions take the form of government regu-



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

lations on religion, such as the nation of Hungary deciding to reduce approved religions from 362 to 14. Another form is government inaction against religious persecution.

Europe, Asia, Africa and South America all face growing religious restrictions, the study found.

### Personal stories

The academic became personal during the July 5 morning networking meeting of denominational leaders from around the world. The president of the Nigerian Baptist Convention was almost in tears as he recounted the growing struggle between Muslims and Christians in the northern and central part of that country.

The Pew Study had noted Nigeria. The study reported Boko Haram — a Muslim militant group — has killed more than 14,000 Nigerian Christians in the past decade. The International Religious Liberty Association added that growing evidence exists that Boko Haram is funded and directed, at least in part, from sources outside Nigeria. The goal is to impose Muslim Sharia law on the entire nation.

With emotion breaking his voice the Nigerian Baptist leader told of church bombings and marauding gangs of Boko Haram thugs hacking people to death with machetes. He described Jos, a major city in central Nigeria, as a ghost town. It once was a thriving city with a predominately Christian population.

Several Baptist churches used to average more than 1,000 worshipers on Sunday morning, he said. Today there will be less than 100 worshipers any given Sunday. The drop in attendance is primarily the result of bombs planted by the Muslim aggressors or fear of being targeted by Boko Haram agents. Stories abound of attackers invading the homes of known Christians and slashing and beating them to death with machetes and clubs.

The Nigerian leader also described how Boko Haram targets the children of pastors. Sons are killed. Daughters are kidnapped and forced into marriages with Muslim men. It is all part of a strategy to deprive the Christian church of its next generation of leaders.

The Nigerian government is unable to act against Boko Haram terror because the Muslim-Christian division has polarized the nation’s military, observers said.

Baptist national leaders from Uganda, Cameroon, Ghana and Rwanda added their own stories of Muslim atrocities and the impact on Christians of a complex and comprehensive strategy to deprive them of religious liberty.

In response to these pleas the BWA General Council adopted a resolution denouncing the levels of violence in the West African country caused by Muslim extremists and noted “that these horrendous acts of inhumanity in Nigeria have promoted fear to freely worship and assemble.”

The resolution also urged the Nigerian government to “ensure safety and security for all people in Nigeria” and urged “Baptists around the world to raise these concerns with their governments, religious leaders and persons of influence.”

Nigeria has more than 2.5 million Baptists and about 9,500 churches. Christianity is the primary religion in the central and southern portions of the nation.

Sadly, the following Sunday, July 7, new reports surfaced of more than 100 Christian being slaughtered by Boko Haram gangs and 12 churches burned (see *The Alabama Baptist*, July 19, 2012, p. 11 or find the article online at [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org)).

For Helwys, as for Christian believers in Nigeria and many other parts of the world, worshipping God freely and openly through faith in Jesus Christ was an expensive commitment. It cost him his life.

### God-given right

Yet the right to worship God according to the dictates of one’s own heart is a God-given right. It did not depend on permission from King James I, nor does it depend on permission from Muslim aggressors today. Religious liberty is God’s gift to humanity. Commitment to religious liberty for Christians, Muslims, “heretics, Turks, Jews or whatsoever” has always been a Baptist hallmark. It still is. That is why Baptist leaders paused to acknowledge the anniversary of its first public expression in the English language. That is why Baptist leaders adopted a strongly worded resolution calling on governments everywhere to guarantee religious liberty to all their citizens.

Let us pray earnestly for those living in persecution because of their religious faith and let us work for religious liberty for all people everywhere. That is the Baptist way.

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Letters to the Editor

See page 12



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

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## President Cathy faces media, political heat; Chicago, Boston attempt to ban new restaurants

**A**ttempts by Chicago and Boston politicians to block the opening of Chick-fil-A restaurants because of the company president's views on marriage would be unconstitutional and also set a dangerous precedent for other businesses, say several attorneys.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel each have been quoted as saying they want to prevent Chick-fil-A's from opening in their cities, with Menino declaring in a letter to Chick-fil-A President Dan Cathy, "There is no place for discrimination on Boston's Freedom Trail and no place for your company alongside it." The Freedom Trail is a path through the city's streets highlighting historic buildings. Emanuel voiced agreement with a Chicago alderman who also opposes a new Chick-fil-A, saying of the company, "They disrespect our fellow neighbors and residents."

Cathy, in two interviews in recent weeks — including one reposted on Baptist Press — has said he believes in the biblical definition of marriage. The company issued a statement saying it treats every customer with "honor, dignity and respect" and that, "going forward," it is going to stay out of the gay "marriage" debate.

David Cortman, an attorney with the legal group Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), said a restaurant cannot be blocked from opening because of the restaurant's or the owner's beliefs.

"It absolutely is not constitutional," Cortman told Baptist Press. "And I think the irony here is that they are claiming this is an issue of freedom and civil rights, but they're actually the ones who would be violating the civil rights of Chick-fil-A not to allow them to open up their business simply because of their views."

But the issue concerns more than just Chick-fil-A, Cortman said, and impacts any business or organization in America whose owners hold views different from that of the government. Boston and Chicago would be practicing viewpoint discrimination — a violation of the Constitution's Free Speech clause, Cortman said.

"It does create both a dangerous and an illegal precedent," he said. "The government shouldn't be in the business of threatening or punishing people for their

thoughts or ideas — whether they are individuals or businesses themselves. And, there's certainly a double standard. You did not hear a politician threatening to deny permits to companies like Home Depot or Starbucks or Target over those companies' aggressive promotion of the homosexual agenda."

Mat Staver, president of the legal group Liberty Counsel, said he, too, believes the attempts would be unconstitutional.

"No city can ban Chick-fil-A because the (company) president has his own view regarding marriage — a view that is held by much of the American public," Staver told Fox News. "To discriminate against Mr. Cathy because of his biblical view and then to extrapolate that to Chick-fil-A is illegal. It would be unconstitutional and certainly any city trying to do so would not win that battle."

Eugene Volokh, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote on his blog, "Denying a private business permits because of such speech by its owner is a blatant First Amendment violation."

The Chicago alderman who initially spoke up against Chick-fil-A, Joe Moreno, told local media he might simply block a proposed new Chick-fil-A in his ward because of traffic concerns. Moreno, though, previously said he opposed a new Chick-fil-A because it was "intolerant" and because he disagreed with Cathy.

Cortman, the ADF attorney, said Moreno will not legally be able to use a legitimate reason — traffic concerns — as cover for his previous comments.

"His true motivations already have been made public, so I think any attempt to backtrack to create what normally would be a legitimate reason wouldn't work in this situation," Cortman said.

The *Los Angeles Times* and *Boston Globe* editorial boards — normally not sources of traditional beliefs — have defended Chick-fil-A's ability to open restaurants.

"Which part of the First Amendment does Menino not understand?" a *Globe*

editorial read July 25. "A business owner's political or religious beliefs should not be a test for the worthiness of his or her application for a business license."

Meanwhile, support for Chick-fil-A continues to grow. Sign-ups for "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day," launched by Mike Huckabee, surged past 300,000 at press time. The event was scheduled for Aug. 1.

(More information is available at [www.ISupportChick-FilA.com](http://www.ISupportChick-FilA.com).)

Billy Graham also spoke up for the company July 26.

"I want to express my support for my good friends Truett Cathy and his son Dan Cathy, and for their strong stand for the Christian faith," Graham said in a statement. "I've known their family for many years and have watched them grow Chick-fil-A into one of the best businesses in America while never compromising

their values. Chick-fil-A serves each of its customers with excellence and treats everyone like a neighbor.

"Each generation faces different issues and challenges, but our standard must always be measured by God's Word. I appreciate the Cathy family's public support for God's definition of marriage."

Graham added, "I also appreciate Gov. Mike Huckabee's leadership and for encouraging Americans to support Chick-fil-A on Aug. 1. As the son of a dairy farmer who milked many a cow, I plan to 'Eat Mor Chikin' and show my support by visiting Chick-fil-A next Wednesday."

Huckabee has said Chick-fil-A deserves support.

### Standing for godly values

"Let's affirm a business that operates on Christian principles and whose executives are willing to take a stand for the godly values we espouse by simply showing up and eating at Chick-fil-A on Wednesday, Aug. 1," he wrote on Facebook. "Too often, those on the left make corporate statements to show support for same-sex 'marriage,' abortion or profanity, but if Christians affirm traditional values, we're considered homophobic, fundamentalists, hate-mongers and intolerant.

"There's no need for anyone to be angry or engage in a verbal battle," Huckabee added. "Simply affirm appreciation for a company run by Christian principles by showing up on ... Aug. 1 or by participating online — tweeting your support or sending a message on Facebook." (BP)



CATHY

**"I appreciate the  
Cathy family's  
public support for  
God's definition of  
marriage."**

**Billy Graham  
evangelist**

# movie theater



en.wikipedia.org

## BAPTISTS RESPOND TO AURORA

### Baptist church in Aurora kindles hope after horror, encourages community

**A**lmost as soon as the gunfire ceased in the Century Theater in Aurora, Colo., local churches began meeting the needs of the hurting in the community and their own congregations.

"I immediately felt the same anxiety that many others felt," said Mitchell Hamilton, pastor of Mississippi Avenue Baptist Church, "as I considered the very real possibility that one of our members might be directly affected. My second thought was to get to the church and begin organizing a response."

The church, located less than a mile from the scene of the shootings, opened its doors for prayer vigils and counseling. All of the church staff members have been involved, Hamilton said, and other counselors were brought in, including one who had ministered following the Columbine shooting.

Besides providing on-site help for the community, the church has empowered their members to minister to those around them.

"This is the essence of Ephesians 4:11-12," Hamilton said. "Our members were able to touch our community in ways the staff never could."

Rose Lamb, a Mississippi Avenue Baptist member, has been helping a co-worker who lost her son. "Parents are not supposed to bury their kids," Lamb said.

While the church may not always have the answer to the "why" questions, Lamb said Christians "can offer comfort and support through listening, prayer and just being there for a hurting world.

"Just offering to pray with someone makes

a huge impact. People remember that."

The media exposure has allowed pastors like Hamilton to share their message personally with reporters and media personnel.

"We became very intentional to share the love of Christ and the gospel with each member of the press we met," Hamilton said. "I had one videographer, with tears, tell me that he had never had anyone pray for him."



HAMILTON

"We will continue to encourage our community," he said. "As time moves forward, we will continue to give a message of hope. It is quite obvious that God is here and touching lives."

Moving forward, Hamilton said the greatest need for the community is prayer.

"The wounds that have been inflicted are too deep to be healed by words or resources. There are plenty who would offer both. We need the Spirit of God to fall on Aurora, draw her people to Him and lead them into a personal relationship with Christ."

Hamilton asked prayers for church members to have:

- ▶ opportunity to minister in the community.
- ▶ the ability to share the love of Christ with hurting people.
- ▶ grace to care for those directly touched by the shooting.

On the Sunday after the shooting, Hamilton added, the church sang the modern hymn, "In Christ Alone," its words having taken on new meaning in such close proximity to such a devastating act of evil — "No power of hell or scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand." (BP)

### SBC chaplain shows God's love

**U**.S. Army Chaplain Jared Vineyard was only in his fifth day on the job at nearby Buckley Air Force base when a dozen innocent victims were brutally murdered by a gunman early July 20 at the Century Theater in Aurora.

Captain Vineyard, a 36-year-old Southern Baptist chaplain, is using every bit of the grief counseling experience he gained as an Army chaplain in Afghanistan to console the family, friends and Navy colleagues of John Larimer, one of 12 victims killed. Another 58 people were injured in the melee.

Larimer was with another sailor who was injured in the attack at the midnight opening of "The Dark Knight Rises," the latest Batman movie.

"The shooting happened less than 10 miles from my house," said Vineyard, who had spent his first three weeks in Aurora getting processed as a resident of the base and moving into his new home. July 16 was his first day on the job. It's a week he won't soon forget.

Vineyard, awakened at 4:30 a.m. July 20 with news of the 12:39 a.m. shooting, took off for the base early and immedi-

ately began counseling with a dozen of Larimer's fellow sailors.

"With the friends and loved ones, you're initially dealing with the shock factor," Vineyard said. "They're not looking for answers. There are no easy answers. The biggest thing to do initially is just to listen.

"We'll have many more opportunities to talk with other people in the days ahead. I don't know how this could happen," he said. "But I know God is loving, good and still on His throne. There are questions but we can look to Him for answers — whether we get them or not. There's peace in that.

Vineyard was one of thousands of local citizens, officials and pastors who attended a prayer vigil at Aurora's municipal complex July 22. There's already been an outpouring of love and support by area churches, civic groups and businesses, he said. "Everybody's working together. While it is such a tragedy, it's been amazing to see how people have come together on a united front just since [July 20]."

"It's a time when Christ can shine through the tragedy — an opportunity to show God's love through the evil." (BP)

***"It's a time when Christ can shine through the tragedy — an opportunity to show God's love through the evil."***

**U.S. Army Chaplain Jared Vineyard**

# massacre

## Shooting victim draws strength, vitality by forgiving gunman

**F**rom his hospital bed, one of the 58 people injured in a July 20 shooting rampage in an Aurora, Colo., movie theater that claimed 12 lives has become a spokesman for Christian forgiveness.

Pierce O’Farrill, a member of the The Edge Church, a Baptist congregation in Aurora, suffered bullet wounds to his right humerus and left foot. Shrapnel remains lodged in his chest.

His experience brought the tragedy home to his church, and it also gave O’Farrill, the Denver Rescue Mission’s vehicle distribution coordinator, a platform to share his faith.

As the world watched the continuous television coverage seeking some reason in the midst of confusing calamity, O’Farrill recounted his horrific experience with prominent media outlets including CBS, ABC and CNN, emphasizing Christ’s power over darkness.

“There is evil in this world, and there is a darkness,” O’Farrill responded to CBS

reporter Erin Moriarty’s question about the shooter’s motivation. “There is an enemy, but the wonderful news is there is a Light, and there is a Light that shines brighter than the darkness ever imaginable.”

O’Farrill surprised some reporters and viewers because he did not speak of resentment toward the gunman.

“This is going to be hard for people to understand, but I feel sorry for him,” he said.

“When I think what that soul must be like to have that much hatred and that much anger in his heart — what every day must be like. I can’t imagine getting out of bed every morning and having that much anger and hatred for people that he undoubtedly has. I’m not angry at him. I’ll pray for him.”

His pastor believes

O’Farrill has prompted a national debate on forgiveness.

“Some of the other survivors have said that they can’t or won’t forgive [the shooter]. Reporters are contrasting him against other survivors, so it is important to understand

**“The reason that Pierce is able to forgive is because Jesus is in him.”**

**Pastor Ryan Heller  
The Edge Church,  
Aurora, Colo.**



BP photo

Pastor Ryan Heller of The Edge Church, Aurora, Colo., visits hospitalized theater massacre victim Pierce O’Farrill, who has publicly forgiven the gunman.

what Jesus says about forgiving,” said Ryan Heller, pastor of The Edge Church.

The Sunday following the shooting, Heller spoke words of encouragement to his congregation, which deeply loves O’Farrill and is hurting for their city.

“Pierce has already forgiven him. I think

that is exactly what we need to talk about this morning,” he said, preaching from Matthew 18:21–22.

“God wants us to live lives of continual forgiveness. Forgiving brings strength and vitality. The reason that Pierce is able to forgive is because Jesus is in him.” (ABP)

## God can’t be ‘blamed for everything that goes wrong’

**By Bob Setzer**  
Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.

**L**ike most Americans, I am heartsick about the tragic shooting at a theater in Aurora, Colo. When the faces of the 12 people who died so young and full of life scroll past on my computer screen, I shake my head in sadness and disbelief.

I also try to turn my grief and bewilderment into prayers for the victims and their families. I do not know what God does with such prayers, but I need and want to believe God honors them. It helps me feel not quite so powerless and hopeless.

It also helps to rail at God in such moments of bewilderment and pain. Fortunately, there is a whole class of Psalms called Psalms of lament that give voice to such wails of anger and accusation.

For starters, try Psalm 10:1–12 and 44:22–26. It will help you believe God is not remote, detached and unmoved by our national grief. Jesus hurled just such a Psalm at the heavens from His cross: “My God, my God,

why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1).

But amidst our railing at God, perhaps we ought to listen for God’s railing at us. God did not create the culture of violence that took a 20-something kid, probably criminally insane, from the suburbs and turned him into a ruthless killing machine.

I do not profess to know all the factors that created the perfect storm of madness and killing rage that erupted in that theater. But in my mind, the celebration of gruesome violence that drives blockbusters like “The Dark Knight Rises” (and the accompanying video games) along with the ready access to military-grade weaponry and thousands of rounds of ammunition are surely part of the lethal mix.

So while we rail at the heavens and accuse God of being AWOL while innocents were being gunned down in a movie theater, I also see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. Only this time he is sitting unseen on the curb of an American cinema complex, head in hands, tears coursing through his fingers: “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace” (Luke 19:42).

In other words, the blame for everything that goes wrong in this broken world cannot be fairly laid at God’s throne. We bear a lot more responsibility than we can dare to face, let alone admit and take measures to address.

Sadly, tortured souls like James Holmes who live on the razor’s edge of sanity and insanity are nothing new. What is new are the number of mass shootings from Columbine to Virginia Tech to Aurora. Why now?

What is fueling this alarming rise in killing violence in our country, spawned not by Islamic terrorists but by the “boy next door” no one ever expected was capable of such an atrocity? I can’t help but believe the glorification of violence in the entertainment industry and the ready access of all citizens to an arsenal suitable for a third-world dictator are a big part of the answer.

Jesus said, “Those who live by the sword will die by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). Does anyone really believe he would have said something different if the weapon of choice were an automatic assault rifle with a hundred-round magazine? (ABP)

**“ARISE, LORD! LIFT UP YOUR HAND, O GOD.  
DO NOT FORGET THE HELPLESS.” PSALM 10:12**

# Across Alabama's Associations

## BIRMINGHAM

► **East Gardendale Church** will hold August Alive! each Thursday in August at 6 p.m. Steve Gaines will speak and Daryl Green will lead special music Aug. 2; Eric Hixson will speak and EGBC Choir will lead special music Aug. 9; Doug Moore will speak and George Weeks will lead special music Aug. 16; Gary Fenton will speak and Frank Jones, Dawn Dixon and friends will lead special music Aug. 23; Siran Stacy will speak and The Uplifted will lead special music Aug. 30. For information call 205-608-0889. Allen Davis is pastor.

## BULLOCK-CENTENNIAL

► **Gene Bridgman** resigned as director of missions for **Bulloch-Centennial Association** to become pastor of Elam Church, Tallassee, in August.

## CALHOUN

► **Jackie L. Bentley** is the new pastor of **Mount View Church, Alexandria**. He previously served seven years at Faith Church, Oxford, and continues his work as a hospice chaplain with Alacare Home Health & Hospice, Gadsden. He and his wife, Lynda, have one child.

## COLUMBIA

► Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, Dothan, will host speaker Allison Wilks at **Columbia Association** Aug. 6, 5:30 p.m. For information call 334-677-7856. Jerry Grandstaff is director of missions.

## EAST CULLMAN

► The youth and evangelism

departments of **East Cullman Association**, along with Wallace State Baptist Campus Ministries, will hold a Youth/Collegiate Back to School Rally Aug. 11, 7 p.m. at Northbrook Church, Cullman. Greg Davis, president of First Priority Greater Birmingham, will speak. Rush of Fools will be in concert. For information call 256-737-9918. Randy Makemson is director of missions.

## MADISON

► **Charles "Charlie" Howell** will begin as the new director of missions for **Madison Association** on Aug. 14. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Blue Ridge, Ga. He holds a master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a doctor of ministry from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga. Howell is married to Susan. ► **Carter's Grove Church, Hazel Green**, will hold revival Aug. 5-8. The Sunday service will be at 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday services, 7 p.m. Terrell Boyd will speak. The church also will celebrate homecoming Aug. 12, 10 a.m. The Servants will sing, Roger Berry will speak and a fellowship meal will follow. Billy Taylor is pastor.



HOWELL

## PINE BARREN

► **Enon Church, Camden**, will hold revival Aug. 5-8. Ser-

vices will be Aug. 5, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Aug. 6-8, each night at 7 p.m. Michael Yancey is pastor.

## SALEM-TROY

► **Kenneth "Ken" Baggett** is the new director of missions for **Salem-Troy Association**. He previously served as pastor of Springfield Church, Brundidge. He and his wife, Becky, have one child and three grandchildren.

## ST. CLAIR

► **Coosa Valley Church, Cropwell**, will hold revival Aug. 6-10, 7 p.m. each evening. Edwin Talley, pastor of First Church, Ragland, will speak. Stemley Church choir, Refuge Church, Ragland, choir and others will lead music. Gordon Lee is pastor of Coosa Valley.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Joe Zeigler** is the new minister of music and worship for **First Church, Tuscaloosa**. He previously served Red Bank Church, Chattanooga, Tenn., as minister of music and worship and as minister of music at First Church, Athens. He holds a master's degree in church music from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Andrea, have two children. Gil McKee is pastor.

## WEST CULLMAN

► **Bethsadia Church, Cullman**, will hold revival Aug. 12-15 with speaker Terry Blankenship. Sunday services will be at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Monday-Wednesday services will be 7 p.m. James Abbott is pastor.

# Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

## Samford trustees endow chair to honor Charles Carter

Samford University's board of trustees approved the formation of an endowed chair in its Beeson Divinity School to honor long-time trustee and retired Baptist pastor Charles T. Carter.

The purpose of the new chair is to ensure the faithful teaching of the rising generation of ministers.



CARTER

Carter, a native of Birmingham, knew from an early age that he was called to preach and became pastor of West End Baptist Church, Birmingham, at 16 years old. He graduated from Samford University in 1956.

He was pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, from 1966 to 1972 and then served as pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, for 26 years. Church membership grew from 2,000 to almost 6,900 under his leadership.

Since his retirement from Shades Mountain Baptist he has served as an interim pastor in numerous churches in Alabama and Mississippi.

Carter also has held several leadership roles in the Southern Baptist Convention. He served two terms as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and nine years on the trustee board of the International Mission Board.

Carter has been a member of the Samford board of trustees for 20 years and in 1999 was named the James H. Chapman Fellow of Pastoral Ministry at Beeson.

"Charles Carter's positive influence at Samford University through the Beeson Divinity School is seen across the world in the meaningful work of our graduates. We are grateful that he has invested so much of his life and ministry here," Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said. "It is entirely fitting that students for decades in the future will know his name as they see it associated with those who will hold this treasured position."

The chair will be filled after the funds to endow it have been raised. (Samford)

## Grover House named volunteer veteran of the year

Grover House, a Sunday School teacher at Wildwood Baptist Church, Cottondale, was recently named the 2012 Volunteer Veteran of the Year by Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). House received the award in Washington on June 29 at the DAR 121st Continental Congress.

House, a Vietnam veteran wounded in 1967, has received the Purple Heart among other awards. A member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2211 in Tuscaloosa, House began volunteering 10 years ago at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center. He has since amassed 15,000 hours of volunteer service. His hours have primarily consisted of working in the occupational therapy department where he helped to prepare ceramics for the patients to paint. He also makes afghan blankets for veterans.

House said one of best parts of the entire DAR award experience was that several of his friends, including his pastor Clay Hahn, were able to attend the special ceremony.

"I'm very proud of him," Hahn said, noting he is proud of everyone who volunteers their time to assist veterans. (Julie Payne)



HOUSE

## Wadley's Malone Baptist ministers to bikers statewide

Cars were not the only things filling the parking lot of Malone Baptist Church, Wadley, on June 17. Motorcycles from the Holy Riders, Crosswinds and Bikers for Christ motorcycle groups lined the parking lot during the annual "Motorcycle Sunday" gathering held at the Randolph Baptist Association church.

"This event started about eight years ago when I began to invite some of my fellow motorcycle riders to come visit my church for worship," said Tim Craft, pastor of Malone Baptist.

As a motorcyclist with the Holy Riders from Anniston, Craft was able to use this connection to invite his group as well as other bikers to fellowship. "Considering we are a smaller church, we don't have a big event like a homecoming so this is our big event that we call 'The Big Sunday,'" he said. The event included a worship service and a lunch immediately following.

(Brittney Knox, TAB intern)



Photo by Bill Hand

## VALLEY'S FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH DONATES MONEY TO CHILDREN'S HOMES

Faith Baptist Church, Valley, in East Liberty Baptist Association donates \$24,604.45 to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) on June 11. Pictured are (left to right) Mae Thompson, Earl McLendon, Robert Hubbard and Steve Sellers, church relations manager for ABCH.



RNS photo

Worshippers at LifeChurch.tv's south Oklahoma City campus pray at a recent service as Senior Pastor Craig Groeschel's sermon is broadcast live via satellite from Edmond, Okla. The multisite megachurch and technocentric ministry applied for a .church domain name to create a more open-ended registry.

# 'Online innovation'

## Religious groups vie for Internet domain names as web address extensions expand

**R**eligious groups have long vied for prime parcels of land, planting churches on town squares and monasteries amid isolated mountains. But now they are targeting real estate in a less tangible sphere: cyberspace.

For the first time in its history, the international non-profit that doles out generic Internet domain names such as ".com" and ".edu" will allow more specific web address extensions like ".church."

Hundreds of companies, Internet entrepreneurs and cities submitted nearly 2,000 applications, seeking the right to own everything from .app to .zulu, the Britain-based International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) announced June 14.

ICANN called the expansion "a new era of online innovation" that will bring "new businesses, new marketing tools, new jobs and new ways to link communities and share information."

But corporations like Amazon and Apple are not the only applicants for coveted online addresses. Religious power players such as the Vatican, the Mormon Church and the American Bible Society are in the mix as well.

At a time when answers to life's questions seem just a mouse click away, the online land grab could become a lucrative investment for savvy spiritual leaders, said Heidi Campbell, an associate professor at Texas A&M University.

Nearly eight in 10 religious Americans are active Internet users, according to a 2011 study by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project. And 69 percent of the estimated 335,000 churches in the United

States have a website, according to a separate study conducted by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research (HIRR).

In other words, there are scores of spiritual seekers online and millions of websites competing for their attention.

"Religious groups clearly see the importance and potential profitability — in ideological or financial terms — to defining the Internet or web space in this way," said Campbell, an expert on how religious groups interact online.

The applications do not come cheap. ICANN charges an \$185,000 application fee and \$25,000 yearly for the right to own and operate the registry. The Vatican paid \$740,000 to apply for .Catholic in four languages. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bid on .LDS and .Mormon.

### .BIBLE in the mix

Other religious domain names applied for include: .Christmas, .Faith, .Islam, .Kosher, .Yoga, and .CBN, the initials of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network.

With more than 100 million ".coms" crowding the web, most Bible-related addresses have been claimed, leaving little room for new websites to spread the Word online, said American Bible Society spokesman Geoffrey Morin.

The domain name .BIBLE would open vast tracts of Internet real estate for churches and companies that want to associate themselves with Scripture.

"Opening this realm gives us a new digital mission ter-

ritory to bring people the Bible," Morin said. "It's where millions of people are looking for answers right now."

LifeChurch.tv, a multisite megachurch and technocentric ministry headquartered in Edmond, Okla., applied to create a more open-ended registry at .church.

As with its popular Bible app and video sermon series, the tech-savvy church wants to put digital tools in the hands of congregations — Christian or not — said Bobby Gruenewald, LifeChurch's "innovation leader."

"We do lot of things and invest a lot of time and money for the good of the global church," Gruenewald said, adding that there will be a minimal fee for .church users.

As long as a proposed .church address is not vulgar, illegal or a trademarked name, LifeChurch will likely allow it, he said.

Their application broadly defines church as any organization of people who share "similar religious beliefs." Ministries and companies such as pew makers will also be allowed, according to Gruenewald.

Still the megachurch's application raises thorny questions, said Scott Thumma, an expert on religion and the Internet at the HIRR.

For example, how will LifeChurch decide who gets in-demand names like FirstBaptist.church? And what happens if conservative churches object to sharing web space with FlyingSpaghettiMonster.church?

LifeChurch has secular competition as well. A for-profit company called Holly Fields Inc. has also applied for .church. ICANN is soliciting public comments and will roll out the new domain names in 2013. Under ICANN rules, LifeChurch and Holly Fields may have to work out an agreement. (RNS)

# 'The Bible's unambiguous standards'

## Culture writer Jonathan Merritt clings to sexual redemption from past experiences

Culture writer Jonathan Merritt says he remains committed to "the Bible's unambiguous standards for sexuality" after revealing that he was sexually molested as a child and once engaged as an adult in inappropriate contact with another man.

"I don't identify as 'gay' because I believe there can be a difference between what one experiences and the life that God offers," Merritt said in an interview posted July 26 on the blog of Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. "I'm a cracked vessel held together only by God's power. And I'm more sure each day that only Christ can make broken people whole."

Merritt, a Baptist who has written two books and many articles for a range of publications, made the comments after a blogger claimed he had evidence Merritt was gay, following Merritt's defense of Chick-fil-A against a potential boycott by gay activists enraged by the company president's defense of traditional marriage.

In the Stetzer interview, Merritt said he was sexually abused at a very young age by an older male neighbor and, at age 13, accepted Jesus. He said he has sought to serve God through brokenness. In 2009 Merritt

wrote an article encouraging Christians to love the sexually broken, and a blogger, whom Merritt did not identify, contacted him in response.

"We corresponded several times by email and text for a couple of weeks, some of them inappropriate. When I was traveling through a city near him, we met for dinner because we'd corresponded so recently. As we were saying goodbye, we had physical contact that went beyond the bounds of friendship," Merritt told Stetzer. "I was overcome with guilt, knowing I had put myself in an unwise situation. We never saw each other again and we ceased contact after a period of time."

Merritt, son of prominent Southern Baptist pastor James Merritt and a teacher at his father's church, Atlanta's Cross Pointe Church, said the church remains supportive. James Merritt is a former Southern Baptist Convention president.

"I met with our church leaders who have been incredibly supportive. They know I'm committed to living the life God demands for those who follow Him," Merritt told Stetzer. "And they know that as I follow Jesus, I'm committed to pursuing His best for me, which includes the Bible's

**"God had allowed an experience of brokenness into my life even if I didn't fully understand it. Rather than run from God, I decided to walk with Him in this."**

Jonathan Merritt, culture writer

unambiguous standards for sexuality."

Bob Stith, former Southern Baptist national strategist for gender issues, said he appreciates the way Merritt has handled the issue.

"Merritt followed the appropriate steps in his journey to deal with this failure and to properly address the incidents in his past. He has put himself in the hands of his church leadership and that should be enough to satisfy those on either side of this debate," Stith told Baptist Press. "We all should be praying for Jonathan."

Stith added, "I have not always been totally comfortable with some of Jonathan's writings and comments, but Ed Stetzer makes it clear that his views on the main issues concerning the church and homosexuality are solid."

Merritt said the childhood experience has been difficult to overcome.

"The experience was followed with a tidal wave of shame and guilt so great that I never told anyone for many years. In the years fol-

lowing this event, I mostly stuffed the experience away and didn't deal with it," he said. "On rare occasion, oppressive thoughts would enter my mind and bring on periods of depression and questioning. I wondered why this had happened to me and what, if anything, it meant."

### Following Jesus

"I decided to follow Jesus at 13 and quickly realized that this event and the confusion that followed was not my fault," he said. "God had allowed an experience of brokenness into my life even if I didn't fully understand it. Rather than run from God, I decided to walk with Him in this. And I believe that helped shape my worldview that sin can be overcome. It's through that lens that I write. And it's through that brokenness that I try to live."

The full text of the interview is posted on Stetzer's blog at [www.edstetzer.com/life-way-research.html](http://www.edstetzer.com/life-way-research.html). (BP)

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

## BASIC TRAINING JOURNEY FOR CHURCH PLANTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



By Otis Corbitt  
State Missionary

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



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

## Elmore Assoc. women get involved in missions

Every second Tuesday of the month, women in Elmore Baptist Association demonstrate God's love as they skillfully create items for missions endeavors.

During these meetings, they make items such as caps and glasses cases for missionaries to take on their trips.

Emily Filipi, director of the missions involvement project group, spoke with Elmore Association director of missions Jim Jackson four years ago about the idea for the group.

The gathering consists of about 12 to 15 ladies who give their time to crochet, knit, sew or aid in other ways to create various items for missionaries.

"If I meet a missionary, I will ask them what kinds of things they need," Filipi said.

Jackson said the ladies meet in the association office. "The group serves amazing purposes," he said. "It gets the missionaries the items they need and it allows women from different churches in the association to be involved in missions."

Jackson said he spoke with a missionary in Houston, Texas, who expressed appreciation for items made by the women for a missions trip.

Filipi said a majority of the tools needed for their projects — such as sewing equipment and fabric — are donated by church members or friends who know about the program.

"The program has developed into more than just a few people over the years," she said.

She noted they have expanded their purpose in other ways, including creating turbans for the cancer center in Montgomery.

The group has also collected shampoos for the women of the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women, created glasses cases for medical missions trips and created bookmarks for missionaries to hand out, just to name a few of their many projects.

Jackson said that in the future he does not foresee a change in the program but will do what is necessary to grow the ministry. (Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

# GROUP effort

By Sondra Washington  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

## Limestone Association, Mission Serve help tornado survivors

Tornadoes and the damage they bring with them have been hard to forget for many in Limestone County. Destruction from the April 2011 and March 2012 tornadoes remained an issue in the county until recently when tornado survivors received much needed help.

A 400-person team of volunteers saturated the area in July to help repair and clean up storm damage to homes and property. From July 9 to 13, Limestone Baptist Association and Mission Serve joined forces to repair roofs, paint, clean yards and do other storm damage work.

For years, the Limestone Association disaster relief team traveled to North Carolina to help Mission Serve teams when they worked in the Cherokee area, and after the tornadoes, Mission Serve added Limestone County to its project list.

### Working together

"Mission Serve brought in about 364 people," said Robert Fullerton, director of missions for Limestone Association. "Including the (association's) disaster relief team, we had about 400 people on-site. We had 29 squads of workers out there, but they did more than 29 jobs."

The Mission Serve volunteers arrived July 7 and were split into teams of 12 workers with one supervisor. Limestone Association's feeding unit provided them with breakfast and dinner, and churches from Limestone and adjoining associations volunteered to feed the teams sack lunches on their work sites. Sunday before the work began, the teams attended church services at their sponsor churches that continued working with them throughout the week.

"They (churches) got to know the team they were working with," said Fullerton's wife, Ann, who helped the

feeding unit. "We had one church per squad."

Fullerton said the overabundance of volunteers helped them complete all the work.

"Then they did some community service projects — repaired porches, replacing a wall or Sheetrock from a water leak, painting and built a walkway bridge over a stream in a yard that had collapsed," he said. "Community projects focused on people who couldn't do it themselves."

Overall Fullerton believes the event was a success.

"I think it was very positive," he said. "I don't know how many man-hours they put in but they went out at 7 in the morning and came in most days at 4 or 5 p.m. They were working those hours for four work days."

Members of the community also appreciated the teams' work.

"I went out on some of the projects and the people were basically overcome knowing someone would come to do something like that for them and pay for the materials when they couldn't do it themselves," Fullerton noted. "They were beside themselves thanking them for doing it."

Ann Fullerton said the association's disaster relief team continued working on some of the community projects well after the original workweek was over.

She noted that the project was overwhelming at first because the association had never done anything on this scale, but it turned out beautifully.

"It was just great because so many people worked together," she said. "All our churches were so gracious, willing and wanting to do it. They were trying to do special things for them. One church's team was working about two miles from them. So one day they decided instead of taking them a sack lunch to take them a hot meal. I think overall our churches were so grateful to be involved." ❧

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*"It was just great because so many people worked together."*

Ann Fullerton, Limestone Baptist Association




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**LIVING BY FAITH** — Rob Jackson, Alabama National Guard chaplain for the 1-167th Infantry Battalion, baptizes a soldier in the bed of a pickup truck at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg, Miss.

# ‘Here is water’

## Alabama National Guard chaplain conducts one-of-a-kind baptism

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?’ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him” (Acts 8:36-38).

This passage about baptism recently came to life in a very real way for Rob Jackson, an Alabama National Guard chaplain for the 1-167th Infantry Battalion.

### Special opportunity

The unit chaplain since late 2010 endorsed by the North American Mission Board and an associate pastor for First Baptist Church, Frisco City, Jackson has conducted many baptisms throughout his various ministry roles but none quite like the baptism that took place at Camp

Shelby near Hattiesburg, Miss., on July 13.

According to Jackson, three of the soldiers preparing for deployment who had placed their faith in Jesus Christ had not yet been baptized and expressed a desire to do so before they left.

Without a proper baptistry on-site, Jackson and chaplain assistant Cpl. Michael Lowe assessed where to conduct the baptisms. Soon after, a pickup truck’s bed was offered as an option.

The truck was set up and a large tarp from a LMTV (light medium tactical vehicle) was used to line the bed of the truck. Lowe had the bed prepared and filled with water for the 7:30 a.m. service.

The three soldiers gathered with Jackson around the truck, and one by one each were baptized with about 50 other soldiers looking on.

Jackson said he had never done



Photos by Stephen Yarbrough and Michael Lowe

**MORNING CEREMONY** — A pickup truck is used for a special baptismal ceremony at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg, Miss. During the early morning baptisms for three soldiers who had placed their faith in Jesus Christ and were preparing for deployment, Jackson read from 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

something like that before. “What better way to share the gospel than to stand out there and let people see it?” he said.

In the days following the baptism a couple of other soldiers inquired about learning more about the gospel, and Jackson is currently following up with those individuals.

According to Jackson, his role as a chaplain is a unique ministry and a wonderful opportunity for ministry.

And for those churches that have a pastor serving in National Guard chaplaincy, Jackson en-

**“The fields are ripe for harvest” and we need workers willing to bring that [harvest] in.**

**Rob Jackson  
Alabama National Guard Chaplain**

courages churches to pray for them as many are working both as chaplains and in church service.

Jackson was reminded of the biblical story in Acts of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch through this

experience and noted it does not matter where you have a baptism.

“The fields are ripe for harvest” and we need workers willing to bring that [harvest] in, he said. (TAB)

*The baptism photo (top, left) was posted on the Facebook pages of Alabama Baptist Chaplaincy Ministries, ALSBOM and The Alabama Baptist and went viral within 3 days with:*

**More than 20,000 views**

**More than 800 shares**

**More than 700 likes**



**N**ow faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

Hebrews 11:1-2

## Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

This week I had the privilege of going to Florence to take a reverse mortgage application for a couple. The man of the house is a businessman and he told me he had been contemplating doing a reverse for about two years. During that time he had talked with other loan originators who had also sent him quotes.

He said he contacted me because I had done a reverse mortgage for a fellow church member, friend and neighbor who had recommended me. My quote was about the same as the others, but he wanted to do business with someone he could trust. I am so grateful for the compliment and strive to earn that trust every day. By the way, all quotes should be about the same because the reverse mortgage is regulated by FHA and the amount of money that is put on the table



Jimmy Dixon

(principal limit) is determined by FHA’s design.

The company I work with (McGowin & King Mortgage) also tries to earn trust every day. Our business strategy is to get business by referral. That means we believe “word

of mouth” is the best advertising. We strive to be competitive brokers with integrity. We want to give folks the best rates, service and experience they can get!

If you’d like a free brochure or quote, please give me a call.

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



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## Church ANNIVERSARIES



### Parker Memorial celebrates 125th anniversary

After 125 years, the members of Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Anniston, in Calhoun Baptist Association commemorated the milestone with four days of celebration appealing to all generations in the community.

The celebration included Building 429, a Christian pop/rock group who performed June 28, followed by a night with Christian comedian Dennis Swanberg on June 29 and a performance by southern gospel singer Janet Paschal on June 30. The four days concluded with a celebration July 1 at Parker Memorial Baptist.

The church also participated in missions to celebrate the milestone. Locally they donated \$10,000 to the Anniston Soup Bowl and helped raise another \$20,000 to assist with the building foundation for its new facility. In addition, church members participated in missions projects in Haiti.

Components of the anniversary service included a check presented to the Anniston Soup Bowl, a presentation of a plaque from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and a spirit-filled message from Parker Memorial Pastor Mack Amis.

A painting of the church was printed onto afghan blankets that were given to the 19 church members who had been members for 60 years or more.

Amis said he hopes to continue to grow the church and maintain the momentum they have. (Brittney Knox, TAB intern)

### Trussville's Argo Baptist Church marks 50 years

July 15 was a special day for Argo Baptist Church, Trussville, as it celebrated its 50th anniversary as well as its annual homecoming.

The service began at 10:30 a.m. with the Greecons, a southern gospel quartet from Georgia that delighted attendees.

James and Beatrice King, two of Argo Baptist's charter members, were recognized for their 50-year commitment to the Lord.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Toni Wall, director of marketing for Birmingham Baptist Association, both presented plaques to the church.

Argo Pastor Ken Maddox spoke about the meaning of homecoming, welcoming those who returned to visit and encouraging longtime members to reach out to the community.

Following the service, past and present members fellowshiped during a covered dish lunch on the grounds.

Maddox, who celebrates his 20th anniversary as pastor in August, said he hopes that the church continues to do the Lord's work for the next 50 years.

"We've been a community church, ministering to the lost community and their families," he said. "I hope we never lose that vision." (Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

# Literacy missions workshop teaches how to reach specific target groups

Literacy missions volunteers from as far away as Laurel, Mont., and as near as Birmingham gathered for the 2012 National Literacy Missions Leadership Workshop at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega in late June. Each of the 29 participants spent a week learning the skills required to teach local church volunteers how to use one of the three Literacy Missions Ministries to reach a specific target group with the gospel.

Ray Willis, a Mission Service Corps volunteer, is minister of evangelism and discipleship at Fellowship Baptist Church, Billings, Mont. Looking for ways that his church could reach out to the southeastern area of Billings led the 72-year-old to begin a tutoring ministry. Last year he attended the National Literacy Missions Leadership Workshop so he could train volunteers to witness through tutoring ministries. In a year, he led

three Tutoring Children and Youth Basic Workshops in which 22 local church volunteers were trained. Fellowship Baptist had 17 elementary-age students enrolled in the 2011-2012 school year. Willis' student, William, became a Christian. A parent of another tutoring student came to Christ, too.

This year Willis returned to the leadership workshop to learn how to equip volunteers to begin adult reading and writing ministries. He feels a burden for the seven Indian reservations in Montana where, he said, "Adult reading and writing ministry is a major area for sharing the gospel."

Roberta Simms, of Epps, La., believes God has a plan to use what she learns at the conference as she ministers in Louisiana. She, like Willis, is training to equip churches to help adult low-level readers read the Bible for themselves.

"God has been preparing me

for this week all my life," she said. Simms grew up in Girls in Action and Acteens where she learned that meeting people's basic needs opens doors to sharing Christ. She currently leads a Bible study in a men's prison and

**"Adult reading and writing ministry is a major area for sharing the gospel."**

**Ray Willis  
Mission Service Corps  
volunteer**

teaches inmates to read better. "When this opportunity (to become a trainer to begin ministries) was presented to me, it was an 'aha' moment. All of my family, church family and prison ministry students were in complete agreement that this ministry was foreseen and

meant to be. I am so humbled to have this blessed opportunity to serve God."

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Georgia Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board jointly funded this year's training. For more information, visit [www.namb.net/literacy](http://www.namb.net/literacy). (Shocco)

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.



By Christine Kapurch  
Correspondent, TAB

## Someone You Should Know

### FLOYD HELTON

Shady Grove Baptist Church, Randolph  
Bibb Baptist Association



HELTON

**FAVORITE VERSE:** Romans 12:1  
**FAVORITE HYMN:** "Amazing Grace"  
**HOBBIES:** Puzzles, singing  
**FAMILY STATUS:** Married for 62 years

to Lindy; four children, DeNay, Kim, Landra and Robin (deceased); four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren

Floyd Helton, 83, has been the music director for Shady Grove Baptist Church for 55 years and says, "Music has been my calling." He joined the church at 16 years old and has remained a member for 67 years. He was also a deacon for 43 of those years.

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

A: When I was younger people would meet in their homes and have revivals. There were 13 teens that were saved that night at a home when I was 16. When I grew up my granddad was music director there (at Shady Grove Baptist) too. You used to be able to hear my granddad for a country mile. We didn't have cars so we would walk two miles to church each way ... I grew up going to Shady Grove except for

two years when I served in the Korean War.

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

A: I had a good mother. She taught me a lot and was instrumental in leading me to the Lord. I lost her at a young age but she was always the biggest influence in leading me to the Lord.

**Q: What does the ministry demand?**

A: You have to be dedicated.

**Q: What do you get from the ministry?**

A: (I get) fulfillment. I believe everyone who doesn't know the Lord [doesn't] know what they are missing. It just means everything to be a Christian.

**Q: How do family members support you?**

A: They love me and treat me good. We'll never get over losing our daughter. My other daughter DeNay is a pianist for the church. She plays and I lead the music. My wife is a huge support, too.

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

A: I'm getting short-winded now so I'm trying to get them to get a young music director so I can retire. As long as the Lord can use us I think we ought to do what we can.

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

A: I hope I'll be around a long time. I'm asking the Lord to let me live as long as my dad did, until he was 88. Singing has been my calling.

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# Letters to the Editor

## NOTE ON CALVINISM

In reference to the “Elephant in room”: Wright exhorts Baptists to unity” article addressing Calvinism in the June 28 issue, I’d like to correct some of the information.

It says that church planting was not cool in the early days and that traditional worship was the only game in town, but church planting was cool in the early days. How does the writer think we got to where we are today? A multitude of megachurches did not just poof up overnight! We came from the Little Brown Church in the Vale with no modern conveniences, meeting once or twice a month and no outreach programs to churches so big and busy we often get drunk on the work of the church instead of spiritual church work. Even as far back as Bible days the apostle Paul was a church planter.

In regard to the section of the article about showing respect to those of differing views on election and salvation:

What about those with differing views showing respect to us who know to be steadfast in the gospel according to knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? No! Christians never have to show respect to teaching that’s wrong or even indecisive. God’s Word is truth and is specific. Another thing that insults the intelligence of us Christians: using the term “differing views” when they themselves

know it is to be termed “wrong views.” Such is not only insulting, but sickening. Most controversy over a Bible verse is an unnecessary evil. God’s words are settled in heaven. It is mankind who makes them controversial.

And to seemingly have to ease up on verbalizing one’s biblical position in Christ in order to actually be committed to Christ doesn’t make sense. To be very vocal of one’s position in Christ enhances one’s commitment to Christ.

D.R. Cannon  
Linden, Ala.

## GRATEFUL READERS

As a member of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Hueytown, I have always been grateful that our pastor leads our congregation to provide *The Alabama Baptist* weekly paper to every member of our church family. Our weekly issue almost always arrives on Thursday, and I look forward to each new issue. After reading an especially excellent issue, I have often thought that I should write and let you know just how much I enjoy the publication. After reading the June 21 issue, I was especially moved to write because I enjoyed literally every page.

Your comment article titled “Thoughts” was especially thought-provoking for me. I also found the article titled “Statement on Calvinism by longtime SBC leaders draws debate” to be very thought-provoking. To know

that great men of faith struggle with this particularly challenging area of theology is enlightening. I found the article titled “A Statement of Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation” to be both enlightening and a wonderful aid in studying this doctrine. Additionally I found the article featuring comments about “the elephant in the room” by Jerry Vines, Albert Mohler and Frank Page to frame the dilemma very forthrightly that Southern Baptists find themselves in. Though I enjoyed the “What’s in a name?” article, I find my own personal attitude toward a new descriptor to be somewhat negative. I recall the descriptor “Missionary Baptists” from my boyhood. I liked that name and didn’t want to see it changed to “Southern Baptists.” The new descriptor, “Great Commission Baptists,” actually again embraces the theological philosophy of the name we left behind from the days of my youth. Since I am now 72 years of age, I am sure my opinion does not come as a surprise.

I want you to know that my wife, Jessica, and I have added you and the staff of *The Alabama Baptist* to our daily prayer list. You are all doing a wonderful job. I am so proud of our Alabama Baptist publication and want every person who plays any role in the excellence of its publication to know and be praised. We pray that God will continue to bless you and the

staff and that you will be able to continue this excellent publication for many years to come.

A. David Hayes  
Hueytown, Ala.

## GUN CONTROL

We have far too many guns in America. They are too easy to obtain and too easy to use. Guns are responsible for many deaths and injuries every year. Not only do we have too many guns, we have too many of the wrong kind. An assault rifle is not a gun. It is a weapon. One of the things I was taught in boot camp was guns are for fun, weapons are for killing.

While I would not want to violate anyone’s constitutional right to own a gun, it seems we’re a little crazy as a society to have let guns proliferate as they have. Aren’t we completely nuts to sell assault rifles the way we do?

There are many Christians, and others, who own guns and use them safely. In light of the massacres (Aurora and Columbine, Colo.), and all the accidental deaths and injuries caused by guns, shouldn’t guns be better regulated and assault rifles completely banned?

As citizens or Christians, are we willing to give up some of our rights in this area if it will save the lives of children and adults and spare hundreds of families from grief and sorrow? Are we our brother’s keeper?

Robert Wilkerson  
Birmingham, Ala.

## Want to know God?

By Pastor Bradley Rushing  
Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan

Do you believe that you are going to heaven when you die? Most people answer that question with a resounding “Yes!” Most people believe themselves to be “good” people.

Jesus shows two problems with that. First Jesus says it is not easy for people to go to heaven. “For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matt. 7:14). Second Jesus says that no one is “good.” A man asked Him what “good deed” he had to do to go to heaven. Jesus said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good” (Matt. 19:17). Jesus refers to God as the only One who is good.

So we may conclude that many who think they are going to heaven actually are not. While they perceive themselves as good, God sees them as bad. Paul explained, “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). This is in comparison with God’s perfect righteousness. Compared to that we are dreadfully bad. The Bible describes mankind without Christ as “sons of disobedience” and “children of wrath” (Eph. 2:2-3).

Paul said, “For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin” (Rom. 3:9). Imagine walking around with a sin-stained umbrella over your head all the time. No matter what good deeds we do, we can never erase the sin that is already in our lives. This sin separates us from God. We are still under sin’s curse, death (Rom. 6:23).

What hope do we have to escape God’s judgment? Jesus lived on earth without sin, always glorifying God completely. We might picture Him walking around with a sparkling clean umbrella over His head. He wasn’t under sin but “under life.” Now picture Jesus trading us our “under sin” umbrella for His “under life” umbrella.

That is what Jesus did for those who turn from sin and trust Him for salvation. On the cross He bore sin and death, offering us eternal life. “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). Turn from sin, trust in Christ and live!

## 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.

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### OTHER POSITIONS

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this relationship and consistent with the traditions of *The Alabama Baptist*. Send resumes and inquiries to: bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

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# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

## Staying in step ... for the most part

It was the 1991 Bama versus Tulane game at home. Bryant-Denny stadium was packed, and Bama was up a lot at halftime. (Bama ultimately won 62-0.)

The Million Dollar Band was on the field doing its usual amazing halftime show, and I was marching right along perfectly in step and in tune. Those moments with the Crimson Tide are still some of my favorite memories.

But that particular October Saturday is forever etched in my mind for a different reason. It is one of my most embarrassing moments of all times. Granted I had embarrassed myself countless times before then, and I certainly have added to the number greatly since then. But I have to say falling flat on my back in the middle of the field with 75,000-plus fans watching wins the award for most embarrassing moment in front of as many people possible.

I am thankful I played the piccolo instead of the tuba. I'm also thankful I happened to be on the end of our curliecue instead of in the middle. At least I avoided creating a spontaneous (and unfortunate) domino-style marching design.

I really don't remember much about the game that day, but I remember everything about those few seconds I spent lying on the football field. I knew my music. I knew our show. I knew every position and step. I could have done it in my sleep.

I loved the exhilarating feel of being on the field at halftime, and that day was no different ... until I was knocked out of line, out of sync and almost out completely. It was then that



I really saw the enormity of the stadium and endless sea of faces and pompoms. Part of me seemed paralyzed as I looked up and around, taking it all in. My fellow band members stepped, marched and played around me, as if I were nothing more than a dropped drumstick. The drum major, who was at least 45 yards away, seemed to be standing right over me. The fans in the stadium seemed to all stop and stare. For a moment, I thought I could actually hear their individual conversations.

Interestingly enough, I could see and think clearly amid the chaos, almost as if I weren't really there and weren't really covering up part of the 30-yard line with my backside.

### Measures of success

I realized how vital each individual on the field was. We all had a part to play in the moment of time we were all experiencing, and for the experience to be successful we each had to be involved, disciplined, committed and focused.

These same concepts are true for us to be successful in all parts of life, including our faith journey. Without involvement, discipline, commitment and focus, we are likely to stumble, get off course, run into others, fall and/or cause confusion. We might even lag behind, get discouraged or distract others, and our experience most definitely will be less than the best.

Focus was the element I cheated that Saturday in 1991. But as quickly as everything fell apart, it came back together. Snapping myself back to reality, I popped back up and in place in one fluid motion.

As we marched off the field in our traditional "Yea, Alabama" way, I convinced myself that only a few people noticed my fall and the ones who did would not know me anyway. A lot of people go to the concession stand during halftime, right? All the band members look alike in their uniforms, right? We move around so much on the field, it would be hard to spot the redhead playing the piccolo anyway, right?

Wrong. Boy was I wrong!

## Rashional EXTRAS ...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

## Tips for studying the Bible

By John Herring

Executive pastor, Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville

Direct publisher, Life Bible Study and Student Life Bible Study by NavPress

- ▶ Pick the right time — consistency is the key. Meet God at the same time every day.
- ▶ Choose the right place — find a place free from distractions and with good light.
- ▶ Use the right tools — the Bible, of course. But other tools could include: a study Bible written in a clear language that you can read, a concordance, a Bible dictionary, a notebook or journal, a pen and a highlighter. There are worlds of tools available via the Internet or Bible software packages you can load on your computer. Find the tools you feel most comfortable using and make sure they are all in your study place.

1. The Bible — have your Bible handy and have a daily plan for reading through it. A study Bible is a good choice because it has notes and cross references included in the body of the text. Remember the Bible was not originally written in English, so finding an English translation that fits your understanding is perfectly acceptable.

If you cannot quite understand the King James Version, try the New King James Version. If you want a scholarly approach, the NASB or the ESB may be good choices. If you would like a more contemporary translation, The Message is a good choice.

If you want to study the Bible online, [biblia.com](http://biblia.com) or Bible Gateway are great tools that allow you to view multiple versions side by side. YouVersion has applications (apps) for mobile use. With a mo-

bile app, remember to download the complete translation to your phone or you will not be able to access it if you are on a plane or out of cell coverage.

2. Devotionals/devotional readers — these books typically contain a suggested daily reading along with a Scripture reference or a Bible verse. There are devotional readers for men, women, boys and girls. There are devotional books for executives, housewives, students and grandparents. If you need a little help jump-starting your daily quiet time with God, these books can be a great addition to your daily Bible study.

3. Journals — a wonderful way for you to chronicle your time with the Lord each day. Journals can be as simple as a loose-leaf notebook or as complex as computer-journaling software.

There is no right or wrong way to journal. Some study the Scripture and then record their thoughts. Others do the opposite. Personally I break my journaling into small sections. I start with prayer and may record a prayer thought. Then I will read my Scripture passage for the day. Next I move to my thoughts for the day in four areas built on an acrostic for the word "LIFE."

L — Loved ones: What is God teaching me or how is my heart leaning for my loved ones?

I — Influence: How well or how poorly am I using my influence based upon my reading of the Scripture today?

F — Faith: What are my faith challenges based on this reading?

E — Experiences: Through my experiences, based on the reading for this day, what is God teaching me? How is He moving me?

## SMART goals

"A good goal is ...

S — Specific  
M — Measureable  
A — Achievable  
R — Realistic  
T — Time-bound"

"There is tremendous power in goal setting. Setting goals creates a synergy that can exist no other way."

"The first step of goal setting is to make a list."

"A dream that isn't written down is just a wish."

"A goal without a timeline is just an open-ended wish. It has no power."

"It doesn't accomplish anything if we ruin today by worrying about tomorrow."

—Terry D. Newberry  
"The Boss: Sometimes a Life Transcends a Lifetime"

## Health tips from "40 Days to Better Living — Optimal Health"

By Dr. Scott Morris

Church Health Center of Memphis  
[www.churchhealthcenter.org](http://www.churchhealthcenter.org)

▶ Time yourself when you brush your teeth. You should brush your teeth for about two minutes, spending 30 seconds brushing each quadrant (upper left, upper right, lower left and lower right).

▶ You should floss your teeth every day. The best time is after you brush and before going to bed. Wax-coated floss helps with tightly spaced teeth.

▶ Critique your vision and make sure your sight is good and/or your prescription is updated.

"Nobody achieves anything great by giving the minimum. No teams win championships without making sacrifices and giving their best."

—John Maxwell  
"The 5 Levels of Leadership"

## DO YOU BLOG?

Email me with a blog you would like for me to read and possibly share — jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at [thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com](http://thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com).

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 5

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

### TRIVIAL PURSUIT

**Judges 13:24-25; 16:4-5, 15-17, 19-20, 28-30**

God's grace covers and cleanses us, but the consequences of our rebellious actions and attitudes may remain with us for life. Such is the case with Samson. This man was set apart for service to God before he was born. Throughout his life he honored the Nazirite vow (Num. 6:1-8) that his parents vowed for him (Judg. 13:4-5). As he neared his life's end, he pursued trivial matters that ended up costing him his testimony, his dignity and his life.

#### Enabled by the Lord (13:24-25)

Many couples today experience great difficulty conceiving a child. Vast sums of money may be invested in medical procedures that end in miscarriage or without conception. Hopes are raised only to be crushed again.

Women in Scripture had few options: bear a child or be replaced by a fertile woman. For many of the women whose husbands chose not to take a second wife, the Scriptures record God's blessing of a child to them in His timing: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth, to name a few. Manoah's wife was among those "barren" women whom God chose to bless with a child.

The Lord blessed Manoah and his wife with a son. He blessed Samson with superhuman strength. With blessing comes responsibility, and the text indicates that Samson's parents faithfully trained him to follow the Lord. As God blesses believers and grants His grace, each follower of Christ has the responsibility to pass on those blessings to others.

#### Enticed to Trifle (16:4-5, 15-17)

In the intervening chapters Samson grows in strength and in his ability to protect the people of Israel. On numerous occasions he humiliates the Dagon-worshipping Philistines who have wreaked havoc on his people. His demonstrations of power boggle the imagination.

Then his mind begins to wander, as does his heart. Rather than loving God with all his heart, soul and strength, he allowed selfish passions to capture his imagination. The commitments of the Nazirite, so clearly defined in the Law, were replaced with temporal concerns of a man in the prime of his life.

Samson killed a lion and then returned to its carcass for honey. He made himself ceremonially unclean, visiting Philistine prostitutes. Finally he revealed to Delilah that his hair was the key to his strength. The Philistine temptress seduced him because he chose to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

#### Blinded by Spiritual Insensitivity (16:19-20)

The judge's lust had blinded him to Delilah's treachery. He discovered that the Lord had left him when he tried to ward off the Philistines. He faced the humiliation of having his eyes gouged out. Samson, the great and powerful Israelite, was reduced to a sideshow attraction for Philistines as they worshiped the sea creature Dagon.

What will it take for you to be broken about your sin? You and I are in desperate need of God's grace, yet we often live out our lives as if we have everything under control. We pursue useless pleasures. We play mindless games. We entertain ourselves without discernment. Will it take humiliation for us to repent?

#### Victorious Through Faith (16:28-30)

Samson believed God. He believed that God listened to prayer. He believed that God gave him strength. He believed that God would allow him to dislodge the load-bearing pillars and bring down the temple of Dagon. Even as he surrendered his life to the will of God, he believed that the Lord was with him once again.

Hebrews 11 indicates that Samson was a man of faith (11:32-34). Like the others listed in that chapter, he was a sinner looking forward to the coming Redeemer. Even in this, we have something to learn from the man who sought trivial pursuits.

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

### THE PERSON GOD USES — MAKE NO EXCUSES Jeremiah 1:4-14, 17-19

Jeremiah is a favorite character in the Old Testament. He comes before us as a man of faith who, through many distressing circumstances that made him doubt and cry out in despair, still lived a life devoted to God.

He stood steadfast, and it is not insignificant that more is known of the life of Jeremiah than of any other prophet, for his life shows us the possibilities of living for God in a "godless" society.

#### God Calls (4-8)

The book of Jeremiah spans about a 50-year period, from the end of the seventh century to the middle of the sixth century B.C. Israel (the Northern Kingdom) had long ago disappeared as an independent entity. Judah alone remained. Assyrian power, and its sphere of influence, was in decline. The threat of Babylon, however, was on the horizon and Jeremiah lived through the years of invasion and exile when the city and temple of Jerusalem experienced the judgment of God.

It is in this context that Jeremiah hears the call of God to move from being a priest to become a prophet.

God's hand was on his life even before he was conceived in his mother's womb. He was born according to God's appointment — God had a plan for his life that fitted in with His eternal purposes of salvation.

Immediately when Jeremiah heard the call of God on his life, his response was one of excuse: "Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

I am not surprised that he felt inadequate to the task. He was only a boy — probably in his late teens — and God was asking him to preach to a rebellious people a message of judgment. If there is not some hesitation in a person who hears the call of God, then we might question that person's sense of dependence upon God. Yet God tells

him not to fear because "I am with you."  
**God Equips (9-10)**

The most common phrase in Jeremiah's call is "the word of the Lord." That word became part of his daily living. It was a word that contained both promise and warning. It brought a great sense of assurance to Jeremiah's life, but it also caused him pain as he proclaimed it to a rebellious people.

In his own personal walk with God he was to discover that God's Word is a book about living in God's world and getting back in our spiritual lives to what God wants us to be — a man or woman who offers themselves in obedience to the commands of Scripture.

#### God Affirms (11-14, 17-19)

God affirmed His word to Jeremiah by giving him a promise. He directed him to the almond tree.

Anathoth to this very day remains a center for almond-growing. The modern visitor to the area in the very early spring is promised the memorable sight of almond trees in bloom in great profusion around the village. The almond tree is the very earliest to bloom in spring. Before it puts forth its leaves it puts forth blossoms, white and snowy.

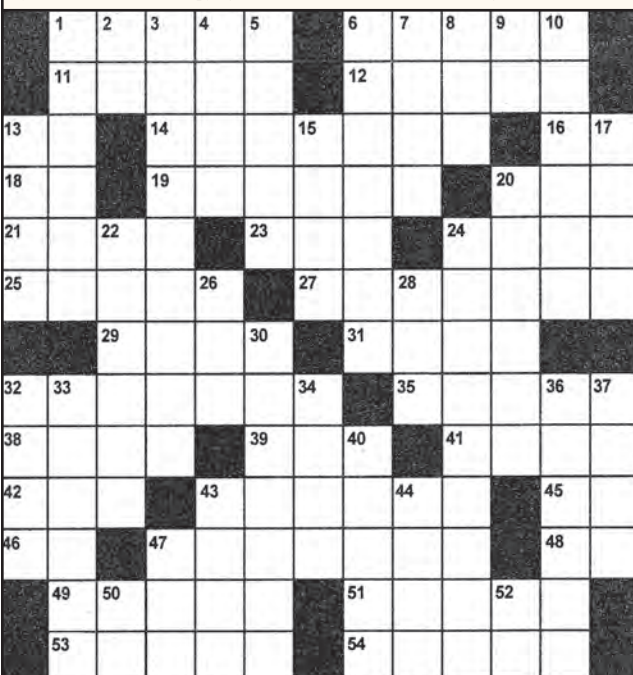
It is a sign that spring and summer are around the corner and that the fruit of harvest will come.

God says, "I am watching over my word to perform it." The word translated "almond" sounds like the Hebrew word for "watch over." The almond tree assures Jeremiah that God's promises will not fail — He will accomplish all that He promises.

Yet He also tells Jeremiah that judgment will come. Out of the north disaster will come as the Babylonian armies threaten and then destroy the city and the temple. This was a message that Jeremiah would proclaim with tenacity, but it would cause him great pain as the people rejected his message and refused to turn to the Lord for mercy.

## Christian Crossword

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- Across**
- He that earneth \_\_\_\_\_. (Hag. 1:6)
  - Let all \_\_\_\_\_ that seek thee rejoice. (Ps. 40:16)
  - Thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 102:13)
  - Eliab the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (Num. 2:7)
  - And I will walk \_\_\_\_\_ liberty. (Ps. 119:45)
  - He hath settled on his \_\_\_\_\_, hath not. (Jer. 48:11; 2 words)
  - The ungodly are not \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 1:4)
  - Exist.
  - Ark of God came to \_\_\_\_\_ for there was \_\_\_\_\_ deadly \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Sam. 5:10,11; 2 words)
  - On the east side of \_\_\_\_\_. (Num. 34:11)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ also the Jairite was \_\_\_\_\_ chief ruler. (2 Sam. 20:26; 2 words)
  - How great is the \_\_\_\_\_ of them. (Ps. 139:17)
  - Thou hast also turned the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 89:43)
  - As for such as turn \_\_\_\_\_ unto. (Ps. 125:5)
  - More than twelve \_\_\_\_\_ of angels? (Matt. 26:53)
  - Who is a \_\_\_\_\_ but he that denieth. (1 John 2:22)
  - Thou art \_\_\_\_\_ God that \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 5:4, 2 words)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_ his hand also

- \_\_\_\_\_ sea. (Ps. 89:25; 3 words)
  - \_\_\_\_\_, so would we ... them \_\_\_\_\_ say. (Ps. 35:25; 2 words)
  - And \_\_\_\_\_ out of the valley. (Ps. 60:6)
  - Lyric poem.
  - Beyond the tower of \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 35:21)
  - National Institutes of Health (abbr.).
  - Transgressions as \_\_\_\_\_ ... multitude, \_\_\_\_\_ did ... (Job 31:33, 34; 2 words)
  - Texas Instruments (abbr.).
  - I have given \_\_\_\_\_ unto the children. (Deut. 2:9)
  - Borders of Archi to \_\_\_\_\_. (Josh. 16:2)
  - Hewlett Packard (abbr.).
  - Unto thy father that \_\_\_\_\_ thee. (Prov. 23:22)
  - They that sow in \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 126:5)
  - And \_\_\_\_\_ the lamp of God ... down \_\_\_\_\_ sleep. (1 Sam. 3:3; 2 words)
  - To \_\_\_\_\_ thee good at thy latter \_\_\_\_\_. (Deut. 8:16; 2 words, reverse order)
- Down**
- Beside the still \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 23:2)
  - Given \_\_\_\_\_ unto the children. (Deut. 2:9)
  - Of Brazilli the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezra 2:61)
  - He called the name of the well \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 26:20)
  - Then shall the \_\_\_\_\_ be ashamed. (Micah 3:7)
  - Obey God rather \_\_\_\_\_, (Acts 5:29; 2 words)
  - City of Sepharvaim, \_\_\_\_\_, and Ivah? (Is. 37:13)
  - God is my King of \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 74:12)
  - I am \_\_\_\_\_ troubled. (Ps. 77:4)
  - Lifted up as an \_\_\_\_\_ upon his land. (Zech. 9:16)
  - Of the course of \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 1:5)
  - He restoreth my \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 23:3)
  - May fall by his strong \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 10:10)
  - Why make ye this \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ weep? (Mark 5:39; 2 words)
  - What \_\_\_\_\_ thee now. (Is. 22:1)
  - And \_\_\_\_\_ taken ... not any, \_\_\_\_\_ great. (1 Sam. 30:2; 2 words, reverse order)
  - The meek shall \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 22:26)
  - Called to \_\_\_\_\_ out into \_\_\_\_\_ place. (Heb. 11:8; 2 words)
  - A damsel came \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, named \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 12:13; 2 words, reverse order)
  - Zophah, and \_\_\_\_\_, and Shelesh. (1 Chron. 7:35)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ also shall \_\_\_\_\_ a possession. (Num. 24:18; 2 words)
  - Beyond the tower of \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 35:21)
  - Quit of thine \_\_\_\_\_ ... words, \_\_\_\_\_ be it. (Josh. 2:20, 21; 2 words)
  - Voyage, flight or drive.
  - To speak in a theatrical manner.
  - Discovered \_\_\_\_\_ thy rebuke, O Lord, \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 18:15; 2 words)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ God ... of \_\_\_\_\_ strings. (Ps. 144:9; 2 words)
  - Mine \_\_\_\_\_ is as nothing. (Ps. 39:5)
  - The sons of Judah were \_\_\_\_\_. (Num. 26:19)
  - Rural Delivery (abbr.).



# Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

## NAMB chaplain to leave SBC due to media controversy

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — A Southern Baptist-endorsed Air Force chaplain portrayed recently in national media as watching approvingly the blessing of a same-sex civil union in the chapel he oversees informed officials at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) July 19 that he is leaving the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The Associated Press (AP) news article implied that Air Force Chaplain (Col.) Timothy Wagoner condoned the same-sex ceremony.

Wagoner supervises chaplains of lower rank and other faiths at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in Wrightstown, N.J. He clarified to NAMB his position on civil unions and his responsibilities as a supervising chaplain.

“The (AP) article does not accurately reflect why I attended a civil union,” Wagoner said. “The general tone of the article has led many to conclude incorrectly that I personally support same-sex civil unions, with statements such as ‘he was watching supportively.’”

After the AP article appeared, Douglas Carver, NAMB’s executive director for chaplaincy, said NAMB’s chaplaincy office immediately emailed a letter to all its chaplains, reinforcing the Southern Baptist position on same-sex civil unions.

On July 20 Baptist Press quoted NAMB President Kevin Ezell saying that he expects the 1,450 Southern Baptist chaplains that serve in the military to support Southern Baptist doctrines “without reservation” and if a chaplain cannot do so, “then it is best to part ways.”

Unless Wagoner finds another body to endorse him, he will have to resign from the military. Attempts to contact him at press time were unsuccessful.

## Washington church votes to disassociate from SBC

WASHINGTON — A 150-year-old church in downtown Washington voted July 25 to disassociate from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The vote by Calvary Baptist Church followed a letter last February sent to the SBC president at the time, Bryant Wright, about concerns with the recent direction of the nation’s second-largest faith group behind Roman Catholics.

“We believe the Southern Baptist Convention has departed from the historic principles of separation of church and state and autonomy of the local church to such a degree that seriously calls into question our continued affiliation with the convention,” said a portion of the letter quoted in a press release.

“Throughout our history Calvary Baptist Church has affirmed the vibrant role faith can play in the public sphere and (the) call of the church to be a prophetic voice in our policy decisions, but always in a manner that is in keeping with the Baptist distinctives of soul freedom and separation of church and state,” said deacon chair Rachel Johnson.

Calvary will continue to affiliate with American Baptist Churches USA, the Alliance of Baptists, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

“I applaud the Calvary congregation for continuing to define a mission and vision for life as a gospel community on the corner of 8th and H, NW,” said Amy Butler, pastor of the church since 2003.

## Duke University names first African-American dean

DURHAM, N.C. — An ordained Baptist minister and Princeton Theological Seminary professor has been named the first African-American dean of the chapel at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

Luke Powery, 38, the Perry and Georgia Engle assistant professor of homiletics on the Princeton faculty since 2006, grew up in the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition but was ordained by the Progressive National Baptist Convention. He has served in an ecumenical capacity in churches throughout Switzerland, Canada and the United States.

Powery, who begins his new position Sept. 1, succeeds Duke Chapel Dean Samuel Wells, who stepped down this summer after seven years to return to England as the vicar of the historic St. Martin-in-the-Fields Anglican church in London.

Duke University is historically affiliated with the United Methodist Church, but services at Duke Chapel are ecumenical. As dean, Powery will oversee the operation of the chapel, which has a staff of about 25 and several student interns in working to connect the academic and spiritual lives of the university’s students, faculty and staff.

# HEART OF MISSIONS ...

**St. Clair Baptist Association** Woman’s Missionary Union director Helen Jackson was among the group of 11 that traveled to work with Mission Hope for Kids in Elizabethtown, Ky., June 23–29.

The group was composed of members from First Baptist Church, Moody; First Baptist Church, Pell City; First Baptist Church, Ashville; and Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville.

In Kentucky they ministered to inner-city children and their families by distributing 75–100 bags of food staples, handing out 125 packs of hygiene items, organizing a backyard Bible club and hosting a block party for more than 200 families.

Inner-city children were bused in for the backyard Bible club, where they were taught God’s Word and fed a meal. More than 135 children were reached through this ministry.

This trip would not have been possible without the churches from St. Clair Association that collected the food staples and hygiene items dispensed, Jackson said, which filled a U-Haul trailer.

Plans are being made to return with a group of youth during this year’s fall break.

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

**Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville**, in Birmingham Baptist Association sent a team of 12 adults and 17 children to Mobile Baptist Association’s International Ministries Center (IMC) June 10–14.

This family missions trip was a study in flexibility with many unexpected factors — like bad weather — attempting to derail the week, team member Amy Bond reported.

Despite those factors the team passed out fliers for the Ministry Center’s Language School, shared the gospel with seafarers and children at the backyard Bible club and even cleaned toilets.

The IMC partners with volunteers like the Northpark Baptist team to proclaim the gospel to seafarers, refugees, local residents, students, non-English

speaking patients in local hospitals and inmates in jail and to provide follow-up ministries to more than 133 nationalities in many languages.

By the end of the trip several men from different nations accepted Christ.

“Everyone’s willingness to do whatever the Lord had planned made the trip a great success,” Bond noted.

Plans are already being made for a return trip to the area next summer.

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

**First Baptist Church, Pell City**, in St. Clair Baptist Association sent a team of 19 to the Mount Elgon region of Kenya, located on the border of Kenya and Uganda, May 27–June 5.

Every year First, Pell City, takes its graduating seniors on a special trip of their choice. This year the six graduates decided to use the trip for ministry instead of recreation.

In Kenya the team, which included medical personnel, set up clinics to provide treatment and godly counseling for those who were seen and treated. Youth pastor Mark Walker said they treated several hundred Kenyans over an eight-day span.

“Some days we had to close the clinic — that’s how many people were there,” Walker said.

When they weren’t helping in the clinic, Walker took the graduates to five area schools where they told Bible stories and spent time playing soccer and Frisbee with the children.

“We had a really great time,” he said, making the nine months the group spent fund raising worth every minute.

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

A team of 31 students and adults from **Cropwell Baptist Church, Pell City**, in St. Clair Baptist Association traveled to Haiti May 26–June 2.

This was the second team Cropwell Baptist has sent to Haiti in a year. Each time the team has collaborated with Sundouloi Ministries Incorporated to minister

to Haitians in the Arcahaie area north of Port-au-Prince.

The team stayed at a compound in Guitton, where it hosted the first men’s conference ever held in the area. The conference lasted three nights and Cropwell Pastor Phillip Burden taught the basics of discipleship to the 100 men who attended each evening.

The team members, who ranged from 13 years old to early 60s, ministered through construction projects, painting, laying a building foundation, rewiring electrical systems and distributing clothes made by members of Cropwell’s Woman’s Missionary Union group.

They also performed dramas and skits for 75–100 students and ministered at churches in Cepres and Nanwöch.

By the end of the trip five Haitians prayed to receive Christ.

Burden said plans are already being made to return to Haiti next summer.

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

**Stanley Kilgore, pastor of Center Grove Baptist Church, Cullman**, in East Cullman Baptist Association took a team of 12 church members to the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts of Belize June 4–12.

In Belize the team conducted pastoral training for Maya and K’etchi pastors and held Vacation Bible School (VBS) in two villages, Mabil Ha and Maya Centre. Averaging 188 children and adults, the VBS events resulted in 23 professions of faith from every age. Of the 23, 12 were baptized in the river before evening worship services.

This is Kilgore’s eighth year taking a team to lead VBS for the American Indian children. Plans are already being made for another trip next June.

Center Grove Baptist will send another team to Belize in December to participate in evangelism and pastoral training. Kilgore has been involved in pastoral training in Belize for more than 23 years and said he plans to continue taking teams to the area twice a year.

(Maggie Walsh, TAB intern)

## Foremost rabbinic authority in Jewish world dies

**R**abbi Yosef Elyashiv, considered by many the foremost rabbinic authority in the Jewish world, died in Jerusalem July 18. He was 102.

Born in Lithuania, Elyashiv moved to Jerusalem with his family at the age of 14, where he was recognized as a budding Torah scholar.

Throughout his life Elyashiv

wielded a huge influence not only among his fellow ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews but with many Sephardi Jews as well.

His rulings on every matter related to Jewish life, usually seen as extremely conservative, have shaped the way hundreds of thousands of haredim (as ultra-Orthodox Jews are often called) conduct their

lives and run their communities.

Many of Elyashiv’s rulings angered secular and non-haredi Israelis because they affected the public at large.

Elyashiv was buried just hours after he died, in only a prayer shawl and not a coffin, according to Israeli custom. An estimated 250,000 ultra-Orthodox Jews attended his funeral. (RNS)



Photo courtesy of Word Records

Dove Award-winning Christian band Sidewalk Prophets hopes to provide life-changing encounters with God as they perform concerts nationwide.

## 'Live like

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

# Christ

## Sidewalk Prophets sees 'God moving through songs'

**F**or the Dove Award-winning group Sidewalk Prophets, "Live Like That" is more than just the title of their latest album. It is a reminder for believers to be aware of their words and actions while striving to be examples of Christ to the world around them.

The songs on the band's new album are designed to encourage believers and are based on the theme verse of Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

"Our prayer is that every song on this album is dedicated to a glimpse of what it means to live like Christ," lead singer Dave Frey said. "We want teenagers to know that if they spend time in prayer and in the Word and serve as an example of Christ to their friends, then they are going to be blown away by what God has prepared for them. The journey is long and not always easy, but thankfully, it's also full of blessings and grace."

"My parents divorced during my junior year of high school. It was a tough time, but I realized that I could either run from God or run to Him. Thankfully I chose the latter. In both good times and bad

times, God is always there. It might not always be an easy situation to endure, but God is always faithful to His children."

In addition to Frey, the group is made up of Ben McDonald, Cal Joslin, Justin Nace and Shaun Tomczak. The band members continue to receive messages about the impact of their debut album, "These Simple Truths," released in 2009, which featured the hit songs "The Words I Would Say" and "You Love Me Anyway."



"A teenager recently came up to us after a concert and, with tears in his eyes, told us about a time when he was on the brink of despair," Frey said. "This young boy said that just as he was about to end his life, a friend drove up beside him and the song playing in the car was 'You Love Me Anyway.' I get goose bumps just thinking about it. That's why we do what we do. It's God moving through songs."

While performing concerts around the country, the group hopes to offer more than a concert. They hope to provide a life-changing encounter with God.

"We often get so comfortable with our faith, but Christ calls us to have a faith that is powerful and moving," Frey said.

"Whether it's taking a missions trip to Africa or visiting with your neighbors, we need to step out of our comfort zone so we can shine the light and love of Christ." ❧

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Wheaton sues to strike abortion drug mandate

WHEATON, Ill. — Evangelical school Wheaton College has joined the list of religious organizations suing to overturn the Obama administration's abortion/contraceptive mandate, asserting in a new federal suit that the mandate for religious organizations is unconstitutional and "runs roughshod over Wheaton's religious beliefs."

The lawsuit was filed July 18, bringing to 24 the number of suits against a mandate that would require religious organizations to offer their employees insurance plans covering contraceptives, including abortion-causing drugs. Those drugs, often called morning-after pills and emergency contraceptives, come under various names, including Plan B and ella.

Illinois-based Wheaton is represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which said the suit was filed in partnership with Catholic University, a Washington-based school which previously filed suit against the mandate in May.

"Wheaton's religious beliefs forbid it from participating in, providing access to, paying for, training others to engage in or otherwise supporting abortion," the Wheaton suit states. It was filed in federal district court for the District of Columbia. "The government's Mandate unconstitutionally coerces Wheaton to violate its deeply-held religious beliefs under threat of heavy fines and penalties."

The mandate, the suit says, violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of freedom of religion and freedom of speech. The mandate was handed down by the Department of Health and Human Services.

### Asian-Americans less religious, study finds

WASHINGTON — The most comprehensive study of religion and Asian-Americans to date finds them less religious than most Americans, but also far more religiously diverse.

"Asian-Americans are really a study in contrasts, with religious groups that are running the gamut from highly religious to highly secular," said Cary Funk, lead researcher on "Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths," released June 19 by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.

The 3,551 Asian-Americans surveyed were 42 percent Christian, compared to 75 percent of all Americans. The next largest group of Asian-Americans identified as unaffiliated (26 percent), followed by Buddhists (14 percent), Hindus (10 percent) and Muslims (4 percent).

As for their religiosity, measured by standard questions asked by religion researchers, religion seems less central in the lives of Asian-Americans than Americans in general. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents say that religion is very important in their lives, compared to 58 percent of Americans in general.

And 30 percent of Asian-Americans say religion is not too important or not at all important to them, compared to 16 percent of all Americans.

### Court upholds Georgia ban on guns in church

ATLANTA — A federal appeals court has upheld Georgia's ban on bringing guns into places of worship.

Jonathan Wilkins, a Baptist pastor, and a gun-rights group had argued that church members should have the right to carry guns into worship services to protect the congregation.

But the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled July 20 that a Georgia law adopted in 2010 does not violate the Thomaston congregation's First and Second Amendment rights.

Gun-rights advocates might want a weapon for self-defense, but that is a "personal preference, motivated by a secular purpose," the court ruled.

The appeals court also rejected arguments about the constitutional amendment permitting U.S. citizens to bear arms.

"A place of worship's right, rooted in the common law, to forbid possession of firearms on its property is entirely consistent with the Second Amendment," the court said. ❧

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