

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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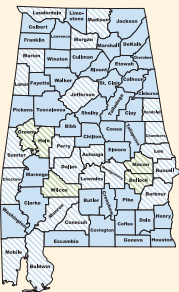
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Photo by Neisha Fuson



Photo by Neisha Fuson

## Prepared

The Alabama Baptist disaster relief cleanup and recovery team from Calhoun Association prepares for deployment to the New Orleans area Aug. 31. Three teams were headed to New Orleans Seminary to help with cleanup on campus.

## Alabama Baptists assist with cleanup following Isaac

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

**H**urricane Isaac gave Alabama Baptist disaster relief officials their first real test-run in the ministry's updated preparation and communication system since the state was stunned by the devastating tornadoes of April 2011.

"This was an excellent opportunity for Alabama disaster relief to exercise the initial coordination for a hurricane event," said Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Heading into the week of Isaac's landfall, then-Tropical Storm Isaac flirted with the Alabama coastline and threatened, at least by some meteorological models, to barrel straight up the state. On Aug. 26, Gov. Robert Bentley declared a state of emergency and ordered mandatory evacuations along the state's coastal area. Johnson also moved into high gear that day,

alerting all disaster relief team leaders to start preparing for the what-if.

As each 24 hours passed, Isaac shifted farther and farther west, finally making landfall just before 7 a.m. Aug. 29 near the mouth of the Mississippi River in southeastern Louisiana as a Category 1 hurricane.

While not as intense as it could have been, the storm did impact the coastal areas of the state in Mobile County.

Johnson worked with Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Baptist Association, to provide chainsaw teams at

Camp Whispering Pines in Citronelle to assist with downed trees.

Johnson also offered assistance to Mississippi and Louisiana in the cleanup efforts happening there.

Three disaster relief teams — cleanup and recovery teams from Calhoun and Cleburne associations and a heavy equipment team out of Tallassee — left early Aug. 31 for New Orleans Seminary to help remove trees from campus and assist in the area.

Two feeding unit teams also were on standby at press time for potential deployment. ☪



Photos courtesy of the Press-Register

**Left:** Bayou La Batre feels the effects of Hurricane Isaac on Aug. 29. **Right:** Hurricane Isaac's powerful storm surge sent Dog River over its banks and into a nearby neighborhood in Mobile.

## Calvinism group meets; Page mulling strategy

**A**n advisory team on the issue of Calvinism met "to listen, to learn and to hope," Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Frank Page reported after the 16-member group met Aug. 29-30 in Nashville.

The goal for the meeting, Page said, "was not to argue theology or to try to change each other's minds."

Page named the advisory team — including Alabama Baptist Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University — "not an official committee," he said in mid-August. He explained it was named to develop "a strategy whereby people of various theological persuasions can purposely work together in missions and evangelism."

Following the meeting Page said, "My hope is that we as a diverse body of Baptists can agree to a genuine, joint acceptance of Great Commission responsibility.

"We must reclaim the principle of respect in our dealings with others," he said. "A common theme around the table is that we need to stop the exaggerations and caricatures of those whose perspective on the extent of the atonement is different from ours."

## BF&M 'wisely crafted'

"I have no interest in changing the Baptist Faith and Message," Page said. "It has been wisely crafted by previous generations of thoughtful, thinking Baptists to allow for a breadth of interpretations about God's purpose of grace. It was written so that Calvinists and non-Calvinists can join hands and hearts for the common cause of world evangelization.

"Our goal is not to solve this issue; it is to rediscover ways we can work together," he said. "I'll be working to distill my thoughts from this initial meeting to begin framing a suggested model for discussion in our next meeting."

The team will meet next in early November. (BP)

Read more about the disaster relief teams at New Orleans Seminary.

Click [here](#) to read.

# COMMENT

## Muhammad, Gautama and Jesus

They are all the same” argue many would-be philosophers when considering the leaders of the world’s great religions. But that conclusion stands in direct opposition to the teachings of the leaders themselves.

Muhammad, the great prophet of Islam, claimed to be the messenger of God. The first confession of that faith confirms this role. In the Kalimah, or Word of Purity, Muslim believers declare, “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.”

As Allah’s prophet, Muhammad conveyed the words of God which are collected in the Quran. The Islamic faith is built on the teachings of that book. Some scholars argue that Islam, more than any other religion, is founded on a book.

There the faithful learn the five pillars of their faith that lead them to salvation: 1. The Kalimah or declaration of faith; 2. The five daily prayers; 3. Obligatory charitable giving based on wealth; 4. Fasting, especially during the month of Ramadan; and 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca, Islam’s holy city.

Islamic scholars delve deep into the philosophy and theology of their faith as found in the Quran but Muhammad is always viewed as a prophet, a messenger from God. His role could be compared to the role Moses played in Judaism when he descended from Mount Sinai with the stone tablet containing the Ten Commandments. Both are viewed as prophets, the leading prophets, of their respective faiths.

Siddhartha Gautama is the founder of Buddhism. He is revered for discovering the way of escape which, for Buddhists, means a way to be freed from the endless chain of reincarnations. For Buddhists the goal is to attain Nirvana, a perfectly peaceful state of mind free from all physical or material elements. Gautama learned what is referred to as The Four Noble Truths: 1. Life means suffering; 2. The origin of suffering is attachment; 3. The cessation of suffering is attainable; and 4. The path to the cessation of suffering.

The path to cessation of suffering has eight parts, he taught. They include right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right liveli-



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

hood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. These are called the Noble Eightfold Path.

Gautama pointedly rejected the idea that Buddhism was dependent on him. He urged followers to “be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves.” He wrote that neither he nor any Buddha that might follow him should lead the faith and the faith was not to be dependent upon him (Book of the Great Decrease).

### His method, not his person

Gautama is the pre-eminent example of the success of his method but that is all. It was his method, not his person which offered hope for followers.

Some understand Jesus like Islam understands Muhammad. He was a good man conscious of a message from God. He was a prophet. Some understand Jesus like Buddhism understands Gautama. He found and taught a way of life that leads one to union with the Eternal.

But to understand Jesus in such ways does violence to the gospel message of the New Testament. As one scholar wrote, “Christianity ... is not a code of laws; it is not a structure of institutions; it is not a system of opinions. It is a life in fellowship with a living Lord. The Word and the Person of Christ, this is the gospel.”

Christianity is faith in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a personal relationship.

John 1:14 declares, “The Word became flesh

and made His dwelling among us.” That Word was “in the beginning.” It was “with God” and it “was God” (John 1:1–2). The Word was the creative force of God evidenced at creation when God created the heavens and the earth by the power of the Word (Gen. 1).

This Word was made flesh in Jesus’ birth. Through the child born in Bethlehem’s stable, God actually entered into human history to give man opportunity to be reconciled to God. “To those who believed in His name,” wrote the apostle John, “He gave the right to become the children of God” (John 1:14).

From the opening words of this Gospel, John taught that faith in Jesus was faith in God and that being united with Jesus was being united with God. That point was made plain in 1 John 5:20 where the writer concludes the letter by reminding readers, “We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true. And we are in Him who is true — even in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

That conclusion was based on the very words of Jesus. To unbelieving Jews who demanded a clear answer about whether He was the Messiah, Jesus announced, “I and my Father are One” (John 10:30).

To puzzled disciples Jesus said, “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work” (John 14:10).

Jesus made sure the disciples would not miss that point when he emphasized, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The apostle Paul adds his support to this teaching in Colossians where he writes in 1:19, “For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.” In Colossians 2:9, he continued, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

And the purpose? “And through Him (Jesus) to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1:20). From 2 Corinthians 5:19, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”

Because of faith in Jesus Christ, Christians have “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27) or as the apostle John wrote, “Whosoever believes on Him (Jesus) should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

For Muslims, Muhammad is an unequalled prophet who gave them a book. For Buddhists, Gautama is a great discoverer who discovered a path to peace of mind.

Only Jesus is God made flesh who provides reconciliation to God through His own blood. Because of who He is and what He did, there is none like Jesus.

## Letters to the Editor

### ‘DANGEROUS’ TRENDS

In response to the editorial “How Were You Impacted by these Trends?” in the Aug. 23 issue, the trends and impact for me were described well by my son recently when he described his church life in Denver:

“My church followed the same ‘attractional’ church model that you described. We did have some nonbelievers come and people who perhaps stopped going to church years ago. However, many of the nonbelievers would ... get bored and then leave. ... We did see

some come to salvation, but a good number of them [left] to attend a church where they were ... disciplined rather than just brought in to help run the ... show. ... [T]he attractional model puts almost the entire focus of the church on what happens on Sunday morning. Our pastor put [most] of his time and energy into what Sunday looked like. ... With that mentality, I think the church stops being the Body of Christ and starts just being a show production company and day care center. I also think it is harmful to the congregation. They get the

idea that the church only evangelizes through that Sunday morning show. ... I left the church soon after I heard the pastor call the staff members who focused on ... teaching classes ‘nonrevenue generating.’ ... The people who were focused on shepherding, discipling and counseling were expendable when giving decreased.”

That concludes my son’s description of what I see as a dangerous trend in this new century.

Gary Briscoe  
Hoover, Ala.





"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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as judged by  
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Photo courtesy of Deerfoot Baptist Church

Manami Okubo of Osaka, Japan, served as summer intern at Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville. She assisted in numerous ministries and spent several days sorting, organizing and filing hundreds of Pastor Roger Willmore's (right) sermon notes into notebooks for easy access and reference.



Photo courtesy of Deerfoot Baptist Church

# Growing relationship

By Grace Thornton  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

## Japanese intern serves Deerfoot Baptist as result of partnership between churches

**M**anami Okubo loves kids. As the daughter of a pastor in Japan, she has never lacked opportunities to be around them. She has been to children's camps and taught the youth group. She became a nursery school teacher.

But there was something else Okubo wanted.

She wanted to save Africa's children. "When I was a child, my Sunday School class donated money to Africa once a month, so I was especially attracted to hunger awareness," she said. "I always thought going to Africa was in the future."

But she did not know how or when. "When I was 20 years old, I became a nursery school teacher. I liked work. I prayed for Africa, but I wanted to work more," she said.

Then one day someone told her prayer was not enough — she needed to act, too.

"I read Isaiah 58:10-11, and I knew the Lord would guide me always," Okubo said. "I solved the worry and decided to go to Africa."

She did not realize Alabama would be a big part of that path.

This summer, on her way to spend a year in Kenya, Okubo served as an intern at Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville. The arrangement came out of a partnership between Deerfoot and Okubo's church in Japan.

"We have Manami as an intern this summer because of my growing relationship with the pastors with whom I work during the Japan Keswick Conventions," said Roger Willmore, Deerfoot's pastor, who has been a part of the

conventions in Japan since 2008. "Last year one of the pastors asked if we would host Manami to provide ESL and ministry mentoring to prepare her for a year of service in Kenya with Japan International Food for the Hungry."

The organization, which Okubo joined in early September, serves countries where hunger, starvation and malnutrition are issues.

"Manami loves children and has felt a call to missions since childhood. Her passion is to work with starving and malnourished children," Willmore said. "Deerfoot has mentored her in English and different methods of ministry. She arrived (in Trussville) the week before Vacation Bible School and jumped right into the activities."

Both Willmore and Okubo agreed — the partnership has been a good experience.

"The people of Alabama are warmhearted and very kind," she said. "I got much love from them, and I learned how I could show

love (back to them)."

Willmore said the Deerfoot family has worked hard to make Okubo feel welcome.

"She has stayed in three homes for extended times and had some overnight visits in another home. In each home she became very involved in family life, including cooking American meals, family trips, crafts and other projects," he said.

Okubo's internship is just one part of a bigger relationship Deerfoot members hope to grow with churches in Japan.

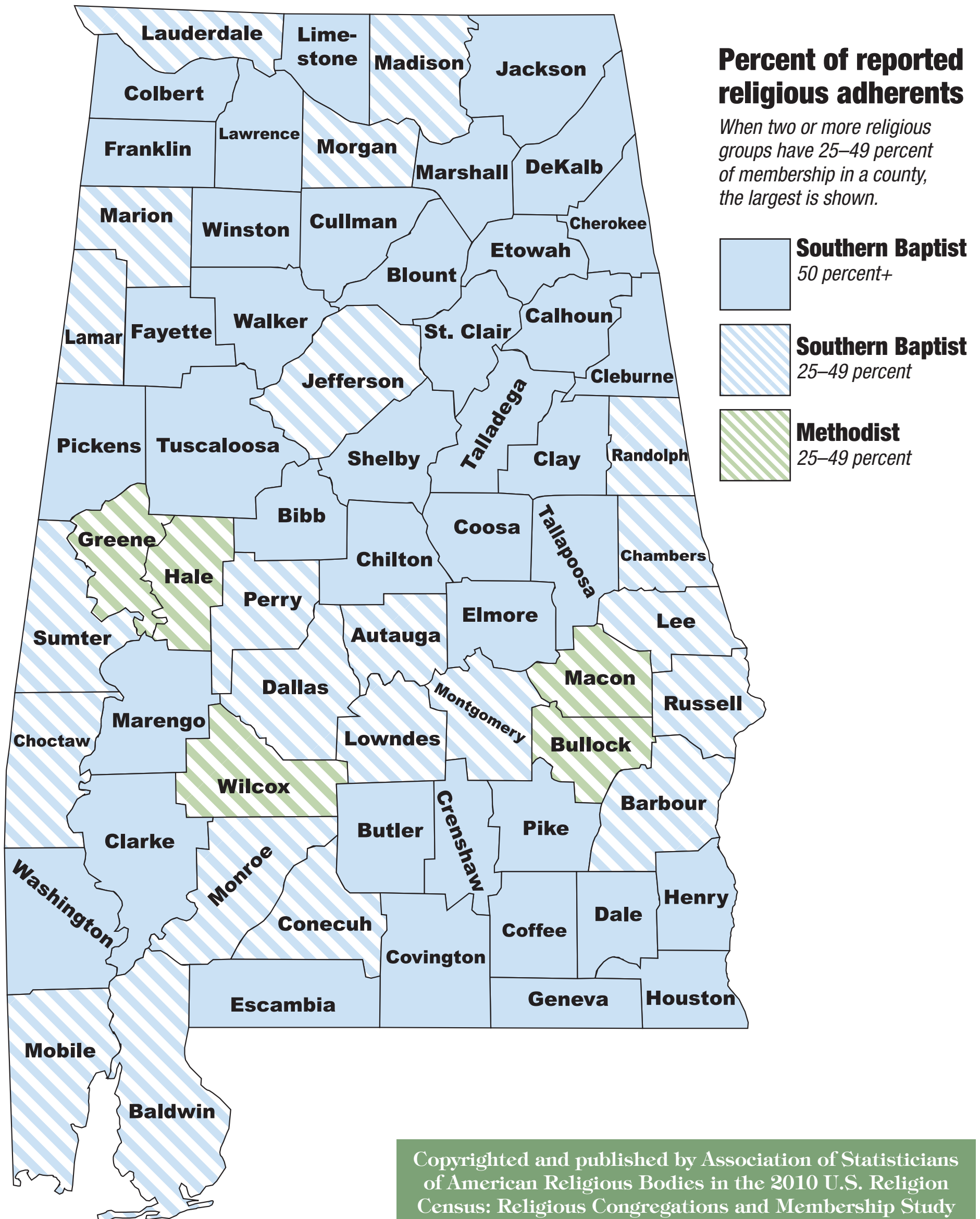
"The idea of exchanging youth groups for a week or two in the summer has been discussed. Also, we have talked about Deerfoot providing a missionary to Osaka, Japan, with a primary focus on ESL for Japanese students," Willmore said.

"Manami is outgoing and loves people, and everyone has loved her," Willmore said. "This is a first step for us in building a greater relationship with Japan." ❧

**"The people of Alabama are warmhearted and very kind. I got much love from them, and I learned how I could show love (back to them)."**

Manami Okubo, intern  
Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville





# Across Alabama's Associations

## BALDWIN

► **Fairhope Community Church** will host the Living Proof Live Simulcast featuring Beth Moore Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m.–3:15 p.m. Doors will open at 7:45 a.m. Travis Cottrell will lead worship. For information call 251-990-4442. David Stookey is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Jeremy Maxfield** is the new pastor of college students and young adults at **The Church at Shelby Crossings, Calera**. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga., and Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He previously served the church as student pastor and small groups pastor. Ken Letson is pastor. ► **First Church, Birmingham**, will host Pat Ingram, missions and ministry consultant for Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, Sept. 6, 10:30 a.m. The emphasis will be the Kathleen Mallory Week of Prayer. A catered lunch by Chef Bob Vanningan will follow. For lunch reservations call 205-870-3888. ► **Living Faith Church, Birmingham**, and **Winwood Church, Birmingham**, in partnership with **Birmingham Association** will

hold the Impact Birmingham evangelism rally at **Huffman Church, Birmingham**, Sept. 23, 6 p.m. Fred Luter, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will speak. Ron Ethridge is pastor of Huffman Church. ► Members and friends of the former **South Avondale Church, Birmingham**, will hold a reunion Sept. 22, 11 a.m. at Irondale Cafe. For reservations call Fannie Daniel at 205-956-5407 or email lavelle.wright@gmail.com.

## COLUMBIA

► **Brad Hardy** is the new pastor of **Kinsey Church**. He is a graduate of The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, Fla., and serves as the executive director of Dothan Rescue Mission.



HARDY

## LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will host This Hope in concert Sept. 16, 9:30 a.m. For informa-

tion visit [www.clements baptist.org](http://www.clements baptist.org) or call 256-729-1328. Tim Anderson is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will host The LeFevre Quartet in concert Sept. 7, 7 p.m. Stanley Holt is pastor.

## SELMA

► **Westwood Church, Selma**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 16, 10:45 a.m. Bill Gardner will speak and Melissa Thompson will lead worship. For information call 334-872-5772. Edward Eaton is pastor.

## SHELBY

► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 9, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. The Hoggle Family will sing.

## WINSTON

► **Beech Grove Church, Haleyville**, will host Jeff Slaughter in concert Sept. 15, 7 p.m. and Sept. 16, 10 a.m. for worship. Glen Bridgemon is pastor. ■

## McGregor, Lucky Palace settle 'bingo' judgment

Electronic bingo gambling enthusiasts have kept several courtrooms across the state busy, specifically as related to operations in Macon County, Houston County and Lowndes County.

In late August, a settlement between VictoryLand (Macon County) casino owner Milton McGregor and Lucky Palace LLC was reported by The Associated Press. Terms of the settlement are confidential.

The original lawsuit was filed by Lucky Palace and 15 charities against McGregor and Macon County Sheriff David Warren for refusing to issue licenses to operate electronic bingo games near VictoryLand, AP reported. The jury returned a \$64 million verdict against McGregor in May. Warren was dropped from the lawsuit.

In Lowndes County, the more than 100 machines confiscated

from what was White Hall gaming center in 2009 have been ordered destroyed, according to CBS 42.

And in Houston County, the judge assigned to the Center Stage case where 600 machines and more than \$283,000 were seized in late July has recused himself from the case. A motion also was filed to have the case dismissed. The attorney general had not responded to the motions at press time. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Mount Olive Baptist Church

## HACKLEBURG'S MOUNT OLIVE BAPTIST HOLDS NOTE-BURNING CEREMONY

Mount Olive Baptist Church, Hackleburg, in Marion Baptist Association held a note-burning ceremony June 10 to celebrate the final payment on its sanctuary and welcome area. Participating were (l to r) Mr. and Mrs. Raymon Cantrell, Thomas Emerson, Wendal West, Ann Emerson, Hudon Marbutt and Tommy Osborn, who all served on the building committee.

## Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

### Enon Grove Pastor Hardin retires in August

After 40 years in ministry, Gary Hardin retired Aug. 26 from his six-year role as bivocational pastor of Enon Grove Baptist Church, Cedar Bluff.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Hardin preached his first sermon at First Baptist Church, Centre, in 1972, and later served as pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church, Pinson, and First Baptist Church, Cordova. Outside Alabama, Hardin served as pastor of Crossroads Community Baptist Church, Ann Arbor, Mich., and First Baptist Church, Shepherdsville, Ky.

Hardin was the design editor of The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (now LifeWay Christian Resources) from 1984 to 1992 and now works as a correspondent for *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper, specializing in articles on disaster relief.



HARDIN

"Gary has been a blessing to me personally and to those with whom he works on the disaster relief beat," said Jennifer Davis Rash, executive editor of *The Alabama Baptist*. "His pastor's heart shows through in the way he carries himself, the way he relates and the consideration and concern in which he writes."

Enon Grove Baptist members showed their appreciation to Hardin on Aug. 26 during a special service and fellowship lunch. They also showered him with a plethora of cards and a love offering.

There was a "packed house" and several former members, family members and current members attended the service, Hardin said.

Hardin recognized the "joy and privilege of serving the Lord in multiple roles ... and in different states." And when asked what the biggest lesson was he had learned in his years of service, Hardin answered, "2 Chronicles 20:15 — The battles aren't yours, but God's."

Hardin plans to serve as interim pastor, write and develop a blog during his retirement.

Hardin and his wife, Linda, have three children and four grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)

### Escambia's DOM Andrews to retire in December

Pat Andrews, director of missions (DOM) for Escambia Baptist Association, will retire at the end of December after nearly 12 years in the position.

Andrews graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1981 and was pastor of four churches in Missouri and one church in Pensacola, Fla.

Before serving as DOM for Escambia Association, Andrews served on staff at Pensacola Bay Baptist Association.

During his time as Escambia Association's DOM, Andrews said he has been blessed by opportunities to take international missions trips to places like Mexico, South Africa and the Dominican Republic.

One of his ministry's highlights has been the association's disaster relief team. He reported the team is doing "a great job" in the area as they are called out to help others.

In addition, the association's Children's Camp is also a significant ministry. Andrews reported 164 children attended the camp in July, which is held at Camp Baldwin.

Andrews noted other outreach opportunities and highlights including the association's ministry to the local jail and a number of senior adult trips the association takes each year to various locations in the U.S.

Andrews also has served on the board of trustees for the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries for eight years.

He and his wife, Evelyn, plan to relocate to Oklahoma where her mother currently resides. Andrews said he will miss the area but believes retiring to Oklahoma is the best thing. "This has been the best 12 years of my life" in the Alabama Baptist State Convention, he added.

The Andrews have two sons and two grandchildren. (TAB)



ANDREWS

# 'GOD is at work'

By Maggie Walsh  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Bob Lamb (right), Fellowship of Baptist Educators (FBE) executive director, and Gerald Hasselman, a past FBE president, visit at the FBE 25th anniversary celebration dinner at Samford.

## Fellowship of Baptist Educators celebrates 25 years, expresses urgent need of good teachers

**F**orks clanked and conversation flowed as educators from all walks of life gathered at Samford University in Birmingham for the 25th anniversary celebration dinner of the Fellowship of Baptist Educators (FBE) on July 26.

FBE is a service organization of more than 700 Baptist educators across North America who use their educational skills to fulfill the Great Commission by "teaching them to obey everything I (God) have taught you" (Matt. 28:20).

Attendees enjoyed both the food and fellowship while listening to the soothing strings of a harp played by Jan Hill, a retired missionary to Southeast Asia.

Throughout the dinner various FBE members approached the podium to share about their experiences as participants of the organization.

Charter member June Rose Garrott spoke about the beginnings of FBE and the dream each member shared. Looking over the audience of FBE members, Garrott smiled sweetly.

"Each one of you can tell a story of how grateful you are that the Lord let you swim around the great Baptist pond," said Garrott, who was FBE president from 1999 to 2001.

Emeritus editor of Educomis, FBE's quarterly newsletter, Sylvester Moorhead then approached the podium, detailing the journey the publication has taken since its inception.

Today Educomis consists of FBE news reports and updates, opportunities for members to serve through the International Mission Board and testimonials from FBE members.

FBE Executive Director Emeritus John Carter discussed the growth of FBE, including its Universal Pen Pals program that links Christian young people with students overseas who want to practice their English. At its peak FBE had 2,400 pairs of pen pals, Carter said.

"The major thrust of our education program is to encourage members to be involved in short-term missions projects," Carter said.

James Hastings, FBE vice president/president-elect, echoed Carter's statements and shared about his hopes for the future of FBE.

"We hope to touch more lives so we can help others come to know the love of our Christ," Hastings said. "You need to ask yourselves what God's doing for you and how is He using your skills."

Taking a moment to reminisce, Sadie Buchanan recalled how her father-in-law, Hal Buchanan, worked tirelessly with FBE to start and sustain the program's Book-Link ministry. Book-Link collects and ships Bible and Christian study materials to missionaries, national pastors and school libraries all over the world.

"It was exciting to see their vision become a reality," she said. "Hal once wrote in a letter: 'God is at work. Let us glorify Him through this worldwide effort.'"

Phil and Wilda Perrin then detailed their experiences through FBE with a slideshow presentation and videos of their travels.

"I can't possibly describe the blessing it has been to teach students from so many different pathways of life," said Phil, who has taught numerous subjects of music in China, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia,

Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore and Tanzania.

The Perrins often involved Book-Link in their travels and found them to be very much appreciated and needed, Wilda said, sharing a story of a book she found.

Muslim militants once raided an unnamed village, killing many and burning all the books they could find. Following the attack, Wilda found a book stained with the blood of a fallen seminary student.

### 'Beyond the words'

"Sometimes a book has a story to tell that goes beyond the words on the page," she said.

FBE Executive Director Bob Lamb concluded the dinner by expressing the urgent need of good teachers to be involved in their global teaching initiative.

"We are here to plug teachers, both active and retired, into where they're needed," Lamb said.

FBE membership is free and "inclusive," Lamb said, encouraging current members to seek out more new recruits. For more information about FBE or to join, contact Lamb at 704-434-9392 or email [rlamb12@carolina.rr.com](mailto:rlamb12@carolina.rr.com).

The Book-Link address to ship books is Book-Link International, Inc., 100 Book-Link Way, Eubank, KY 42567. ☎



BP graphic

## Debut of Bible game show sees record viewers, results

**T**he debut of "The American Bible Challenge" game show provided GSN (Game Show Network) its highest ratings ever, the network says.

A total of 1.7 million viewers watched Aug. 23 as host Jeff Foxworthy asked Bible questions of three teams who played for their favorite charities.

The program airs Thursdays at 7 p.m.

"The best-selling book of all time is now GSN's most viewed program of all time, which proves that consumers are yearning for fun, family-friendly entertainment," said Amy Introcaso-Davis, GSN's executive vice president of programming and development. "We are incredibly proud of this show and are happy that it connected with so many viewers."

The game show's debut also helped GSN set a network record for total viewers for a night (2.3 million).

Baptist Press movie/television reviewer Phil Boatwright called "The American Bible Challenge" the best game show he's seen since "Jeopardy."

GSN is found on cable and satellite systems nationwide. On Dish Network, it's channel 116, and on DirectTV, it's 233. (BP)

**BAPTISTS and CALVINISM**  
An International Examination

Written by James Lee Garrett Jr.

Reprinted from The Alabama Baptist

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- Have Baptist theologians affirmed teachings of Calvinism?
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BP photo

# Evidence of Samson?

## Stone seal excavated in Israel dates to 12th century B.C.

A small stone seal unearthed in Israel is possibly the first archaeological evidence of the Old Testament judge Samson, say the co-directors of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Center for Archaeological Research.

While not involved in the excavation that led to the discovery, center co-directors Daniel Warner and Dennis Cole said evidence characterizing the find makes it plausible that the seal supports a story of a young boy killing a lion with his bare hands.

### Half an inch

About half an inch in diameter, the seal depicts a human figure — perhaps with long hair — fighting what appears to be a lion-like animal with a feline tail. The seal dates to the 12th century B.C. and was excavated at the Beth Shemesh site in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem. Archaeologists found the seal with other items on the floor of an excavated house near the Sorek River, the ancient border between Israelite and Philistine territories. Seals were used in biblical times by those of wealth and influence as proof of authenticity.

“My initial assessment based upon what has been published to date would be that once again we have an artifact that does not con-

tradict the biblical text, but in fact affirms it,” said Warner, associate professor of Old Testament and archaeology with New Orleans Seminary.

Excavation directors Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman of Tel Aviv University do not claim that the figure on the seal is of the actual biblical Samson. Rather, they believe the seal probably indicates that a story was being told in 12th century B.C. of a hero who fought a lion.

Judges 14:6 records Samson killing a lion with his bare hands. Samson lived near the end of the biblical era of judges, which scholars have estimated began as early as 1400 B.C. and ended around 1050 B.C. The date of the seal falls within that range.

Warner, on staff at New Orleans Seminary’s Orlando Extension Center in Florida, has been on archaeological expeditions with Bunimovitz and Lederman.

“According to the excavators, whom I have dug with in the past, the evidence places the find in close proximity of Samson’s hometown of Zorah. Beth Shemesh is just across the Sorek Valley to the south of Zorah; in fact you can see it from Beth Shemesh,” Warner said. “The date of the find appears to be in a solid context of the 12th century B.C., certainly

within the time frame of Samson.”

Cole, New Orleans Seminary’s professor of Old Testament and archaeology and chair of the division of biblical studies, said the location of the find is significant.

“The interesting fact is that [the seal] was discovered in the shadows of Samson’s hometown area of Zorah, located on the top of the hill immediately to the north of the [location] where the seal was found,” Cole said. “The late 12th/early 11th century B.C. date would approximately date it to the judges period, and hence Samson.”

Like Bunimovitz and Lederman, Cole said there is no clear evidence that the drawing on the seal depicts Samson himself.

“The geographical, chronological and motif aspects fit the Samson context from Judges, but only textual data could fully confirm a direct relationship between the artifact and the biblical account,” Cole said. (BP)

# Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

## Committee named to seek Land’s successor

WASHINGTON — A search committee has been selected to find a successor to Richard Land as president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC).

Richard Piles, acting chairman of the board of trustees, named Barry Creamer, vice president of academic affairs at Criswell College in Dallas, Texas, as chairman of the presidential search committee.

The other ERLC trustees named to the committee are Ken Barbic, of Washington; Kenda Bartlett, an at-large member of the board from Washington; Lynne Fruechting, from the Kansas-Nebraska convention; Ray Newman, an at-large member from Georgia; and Bernard Snowden, of Virginia. Piles, who serves as pastor of First Baptist Church, Camden, Ark., will serve as an ex officio member.

The committee will be seeking a candidate to bring to the ERLC board to succeed Land, who announced his retirement July 31. Land’s retirement will be effective Oct. 23, 2013, when he will complete 25 years as the ERLC’s president.

Land, 65, chose to announce his retirement nearly 15 months before its effective date to provide “plenty of time for an orderly transition for both the Commission and myself to the next phase of our respective future ministries,” he said in a July 31 letter to Piles.

Beginning in 1988, Land led the transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention’s ethics entity during the denomination’s conservative resurgence. He has acted as an outspoken advocate for biblical positions on such issues as the sanctity of human life, religious freedom, marriage and race relations.

There is not yet a timeline for the committee to bring a recommendation to the board.

## Golden Gate offers online theological master’s

MILL VALLEY, Calif. — Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary announced its entirely online master of theological studies (MTS) degree program is available for the first time beginning this fall. Dually accredited, this 49-hour, two-year program allows students to earn a seminary degree from anywhere in the world without disrupting their current life and ministry.

This program links students with Golden Gate’s faculty as it integrates a wide variety of online methods including graphic and video lectures, video and audio chats, threaded email discussions, shared applications, wiki documents, online exams and posting shared research. The courses are asynchronous so students can conveniently blend assignments into their work week.

“The online concept maximizes learning through weekly interaction with qualified faculty and fellow students,” said Rick Durst, director of Golden Gate’s online education.

The online master of theological studies is dually accredited by Association of Theological Schools and Western Association of Schools and Colleges.



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# Americans do not want guns in churches, poll finds

After the movie theater massacre in Aurora, Colo., and a deadly shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis., Americans are divided on gun control, and within certain religious groups, attitudes are far from ambivalent.

But on the question of guns in churches, there is actual consensus: A strong majority of Americans do not want them in the pews, according to a new poll released Aug. 15 by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) conducted in partnership with Religion News Service (RNS).

"Although the issue of gun control tends to divide Americans by party, gender, region and race, there is broad agreement among the public that there are some places where concealed weapons should be off limits," said Daniel Cox, PRRI's research director.

More than three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) said concealed weapons should not be allowed in houses of worship, compared to 20 percent who disagreed.

The poll, conducted in the wake of the Colorado and Wisconsin shootings, shows that a slim majority (52 percent) of Americans favors passing stricter laws, while 44 percent are opposed.

But walk into a Catholic church or an evangelical congregation, and the worshippers may not be so torn about gun control.

Among white evangelicals, for instance, support for stricter gun control is weak, at 35 percent. That compares to the 62 percent of Catholics and 60 percent of unaffiliated Americans who would like to see tighter gun control laws on the books.

Black Protestants favor stricter gun con-

rol even more strongly than Catholics, according to a 2011 ABC News/Washington Post poll, with 71 percent saying they want tougher gun laws.

As for white mainline Protestants, 42 percent endorse tighter gun control, according to the PRRI/RNS survey. This may be because most mainline Protestants (54 percent) live in a household with a gun, Cox said, and the survey found that those who do not live with guns generally tend to favor more restrictions.

As Americans remain divided on gun control, they show no consensus when asked about the most effective way to prevent mass shootings. "People are all over the map," Cox said, noting that:

▶ 27 percent of respondents said stricter gun control would help.

▶ 22 percent cited better mental health screenings and support for those who want guns.

▶ 20 percent argued for a greater emphasis on God and morality in school and society.

▶ 14 percent want stricter security at public gatherings.

▶ 11 percent said allowing more private citizens to carry guns for protection is the answer.

White evangelicals were more likely than any other group to choose "a greater emphasis on God and morality," with nearly four in 10 saying that this is the best way to prevent mass gun killings.

The poll of 1,006 Americans was conducted Aug. 8-12 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. (RNS)



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# Social media like Facebook, Twitter offer community to homeless, study finds

Here is something everyone can "like:" Social media fosters community, even for those who do not have a home.

A new study finds social media like Twitter and Facebook tear down economic and geographic barriers to help homeless people connect to their families and support networks.

The study was conducted by Art Jipson, a sociologist and criminologist at the University of Dayton in Ohio.

Jipson's study, "Shall I Paint You a Protest: Marxist Analysis of Social Media," was presented Aug. 17 at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Denver, Colo.

He found that homeless people

leverage free online services to find food, shelter and job services, and to keep up with family and friends.

"People think of Facebook as this billion-dollar entity with stock offerings that sells gobs of advertising," Jipson said. "But on Facebook the 'least of our brothers,' as it says in the Bible, have equal access to all of Facebook's offerings and establish a sense of belonging that is based on more than possessions."

Jipson created his study after a homeless man won a prize on Jipson's weekly radio show. When Jipson hand-delivered the prize he discovered the man used his smartphone to stream radio and connect with people on Facebook.

For the study, Jipson spoke with 14 homeless people

about their social media usage.

"Why can't I be on Facebook?" asked one subject in the study. "Just because I am homeless does not mean that I don't care about this stuff, you know? My family is on Facebook. My friends are on Facebook."

Another interviewee said, "No one on the 'net cares if I didn't get a shower yesterday or smell some. They don't judge me, you know? ... I feel accepted. I am accepted."

Jipson said, "We assume that we have nothing in common with people who are different from us — by whatever means we might measure that difference. But a study like this demonstrates that we have more in common than we do in difference." (RNS)

## Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

From time to time I'm asked, "What is it like to have a reverse mortgage?" Well, I asked Max and Carolyn Youngblood (a retired pastor and wife) if they would be so

kind as to write a few thoughts down entitled: Living with a Reverse Mortgage. Here's what they had to say:

"Carolyn and I took out a reverse mortgage a little over two years ago after reading Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist*. Jimmy came to our home and he was most knowledgeable, kind and patient — a true Christian gentleman.

We decided to apply because we had a mortgage that was a struggle to pay each month. Plus there were some improvements that we wanted to make to our home.



Max and Carolyn

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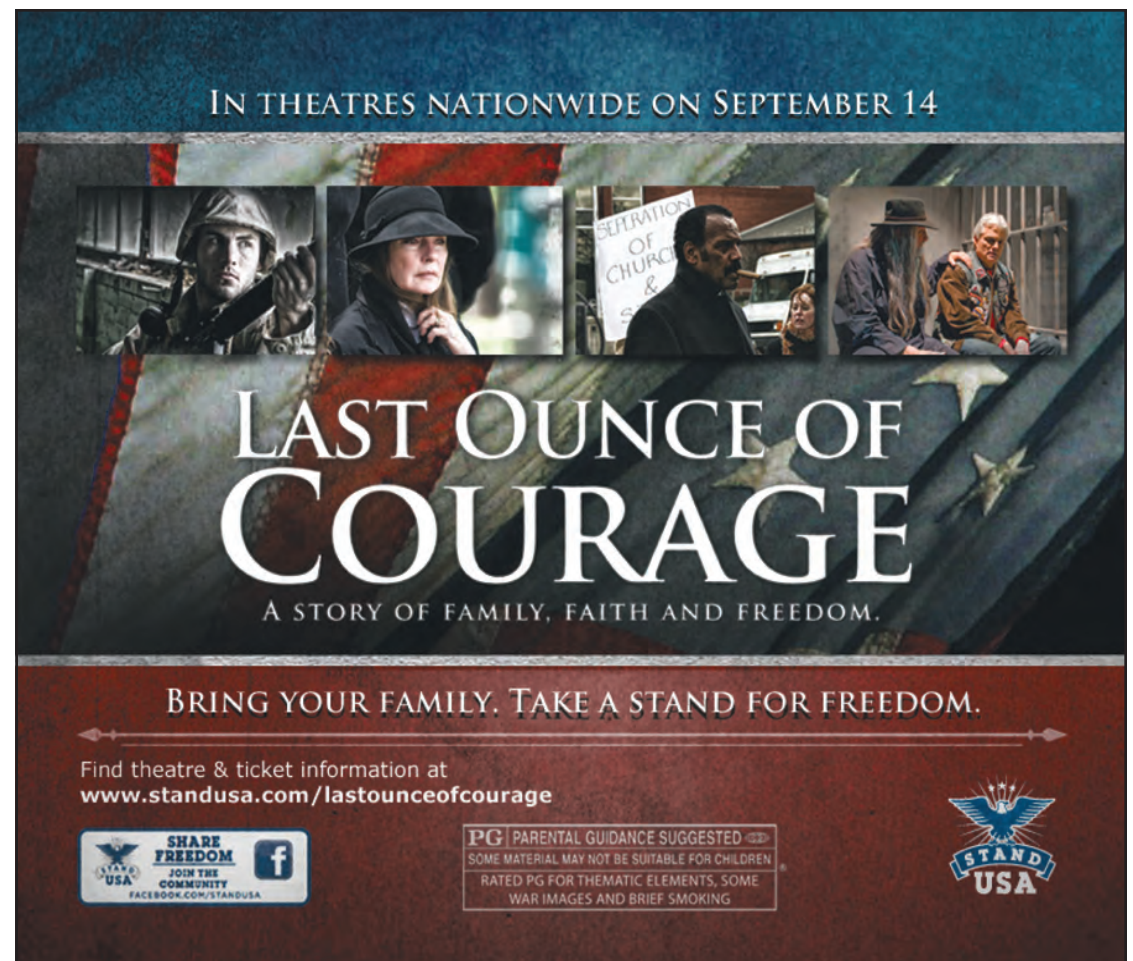
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# 'Incarnational'

## Phillips State Prison seminary program reaches, teaches inmates

By Michael Brooks  
Judson College

The director of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's bachelor's degree program at Phillips State Prison in Buford, Ga., calls the program "incarnational."

"Jesus came to the most depraved — all of us sinners — and modeled what Kingdom living is all about," Jeffrey Farmer said.

"In prison we work with inmates who will incarnate the life of Christ and minister to others inside these walls."

Farmer is the fourth director of the Phillips program, which is part of the seminary's Leavell College, and he currently oversees the second group of students in their degree program. The inaugural class graduated in 2009 and is now disbursed throughout the Georgia prison system serving as assistants to prison chaplains or in other ministries.

Many advocates of prison reform point to the alarming rate of recidivism. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, up to two-thirds of inmates are rearrested within three years of their release from prison. The Phillips program is one attempt to rehabilitate prisoners.

"We don't just educate, we rehabilitate," Farmer said. "If we don't rehabilitate then all we have is smarter criminals."

Professors from the New Orleans extension "hub" in Atlanta are most often enlisted for teaching, including Farmer, and adjuncts are brought in as needed.

"We're limited in class size to 28 or 29," Farmer explained. "Inmates from around the state apply for admission and must have endorsements from their chaplain and other prison staff. Our local screening committee selects men for the program and we have a long waiting list."

### Minister in prison

Farmer explained the ideal seminary candidate has at least 10 years remaining in his sentence so that after graduation he can minister for four to five years in a prison. Upon release many of the graduates hope to serve in local churches or to start churches. For this reason, Farmer explained, no sex offenders are admitted to the program.

One of the Phillips students said he was raised in a Baptist church and was baptized at 11 or 12. He quit school as a teen-



Photo used by permission of Phillips State Prison, Eric Sellers, warden

'GRATEFUL' — Michael Brooks, professor of communications at Judson College in Marion, spent an intensive week at the Phillips State Prison in July teaching a class in oral communications.

ager and fell into a life of crime.

"I've been in prison for six years, and it's been a good thing for me," he said. "I earned my GED in prison and through the Kairos ministry [I] learned about the New Orleans classes. ... It's helped me draw close to God."

Another student explained that after a few days of violence in 1997 he received a 50-year prison sentence. At age 50, with 35 years remaining, he has little hope for release. But in prison he found Christ.

"Prison tests a man through a multitude of adversities, disappointments and temptations," he said. "But I feel called of God to minister to the men here and to

make a positive difference in the lives of those around me."

New Orleans sponsors three other prison programs in the Southeast including those at the Louisiana State Prison, the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women at St. Gabriel and the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. No Cooperative Program funds are used in these programs, so the seminary relies on benefactors with interest in the work.

"We're grateful that the Georgia Department of Corrections and the staff at Phillips are so supportive of our work as we try to impact the kingdom of God," Farmer said.

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

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## Want to know God?

By Pastor John Brock  
Highland Baptist Church, Florence

One interesting thing about relationships is watching how they grow. As time is invested in those we love and trust grows between us, relationships are deepened. As a young man, I heard my father talk about how much more he loved my mother after all those years than he did the day they married. His love for her had grown richer, stronger and deeper over time. I was so in love with my wife on our wedding day I couldn't imagine such a thing, but 23 years later I can tell you it's true. I love her more now than I did then and with a deeper love.

The same thing is true in our relationship with God. He has done everything necessary for our salvation. Although we are sinners separated from Him by our sin and under the sentence of death, He loves us too much to leave us like that. He sent His Son to rescue us. Even though Jesus Christ was without sin, He took our place on the cross and endured the wrath of God that should have been ours.

We know that the dying Savior was the Son of the Living God and that God accepted the sacrifice of His Son as full payment for our sin because He rose again. Today His Holy Spirit shows us the ugliness of our sin and the greatness of His gift and draws us to a place where we willingly surrender our lives to the one who died for us. As we turn in faith from our sin and trust Christ alone for our salvation, He changes us and brings us into a right relationship with God.

That can be true for you today if you are willing and ready to give Him your life. That is where knowing God begins. In that moment we come to know God in a real and personal way through Jesus Christ, but that is not the end. It is only the beginning. Our love for Him grows as we learn to trust His grace over time. Our relationship with Him becomes deeper, richer and sweeter. Some think it's like getting your ticket punched so you miss hell and go to heaven. Those things are true and great, but it is about so much more. Salvation is a relationship with a God who knows us and invites us to know Him.

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

## Recalling the 'grand' moments

Pawpaw ... hahahahaha ... tell me ... heeheeheehee ... the stories ... bahahaha ... of Dime school again," Jacob said, barely able to breathe as he doubled over with laughter thinking of the stories he has heard countless times in his lifetime of 11 months plus a decade. He loves my dad's stories of walking to the one-room school barefooted and all the mischief the youngest of six in a farm family in the early 1950s got into while there. In fact, Jacob's ability to repeat each story with precision while adding a full theatrical performance to them makes his Aunt Jen Jen proud.

A couple of hours away, my young cousin Trey jumps in his grandmother's car after school and shares all the happenings of the day as he reaches for the snack he knew she would have ready for him. Granddad picks up Trey's older brother and shuttles him to ball practice. In both cases, the kids share what's on their hearts and minds, sometimes more than they feel comfortable sharing with their mom and dad. And the grandparents listen, tell stories that relate and somehow help each one deal with that day's drama.

Recently I observed a grandfather and granddaughter discussing college, selecting the best major and thinking about what the granddaughter should do as a career.

Maybe journalism, maybe a TV personality in New York, but definitely an author, Bree says. She wants to write and, at 13, she's already researching how to best go about that.

Papa discusses each option carefully and seriously with her. He doesn't poke fun at her, nor does

he make light of her ideas, except maybe offering a slight grimace at the New York idea.

They chat, we chat, ideas swirl. For a moment I forget she's only in the eighth grade. Then she says something silly and girly and I'm brought back to reality, but still I'm impressed with her goals and maturity at this age. I'm even more impressed with the confidence her granddad puts in her and how he is encouraging her to go after her dreams.

I think back to my own grandparents and remember feeling the same sense of security and love. I'm not sure I realized it at the time, but the memories of sharing my hopes and dreams with my Grandma Davis and her telling me that I should go after whatever my heart desires planted seeds of confidence in me. She loved to write and always wanted to be published. She made it as far as *Grit* magazine and continued to write and submit stories well into her 80s.

My Granny McCaig was a true Proverbs 31 woman and instilled in me a strong work ethic and love of family. She modeled strength, courage, excellence and a deep faith. She taught me so much about life and truly understood my sense of calling. PaPa McCaig loved me a lot and I never doubted it, but I frustrated him because I wouldn't "just be normal like everyone else and come back home and work close by."

I didn't know my Grandpa Davis, but I imagine he must be the culprit for my annoying personality trait of matter-of-fact bluntness. Now you know who gets the blame, right?

As Grandparents Day approaches Sept. 9, I can't send any of my grandparents a card, but I can say a prayer of thanks for the difference they made in my life.

If you still have your grandparents, find time to visit and glean as much wisdom from them as possible. If you are a grandparent, take advantage of every opportunity to encourage your grandchildren — share your love, your life, your faith. You can make a difference and are reaching them from a privileged position.



# Rashional EXTRAS ...

*What topics are on your mind?*

*Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org*

## 'Start! To Follow: How to Be a Successful Follower of Jesus Christ'

By Greg Laurie

It is not enough to study the Bible on a daily basis or even memorize it; it must affect the way we live. It is not enough to go through the Word of God; the Word of God must go through us. It is not how we mark our Bible; it is how our Bible marks us.

Ultimately we must apply what we learn from the Bible to our everyday actions and activities. Remember, Jesus said that if we abide in His Word, then we are His disciples (see John 8:31). The word "abide" is the same word Jesus used in John 15:7 when He said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

We abide in Jesus as we draw strength and resources from Him. In the same way that a vine draws its resources from the soil and the branch draws its resources from the vine, we are to maintain unbroken fellowship, communion and friendship with God. If we are abiding in God's Word, it means we are drawing our ideas and lifestyle from it. As a result, our actions and speech are being affected.

Is God's Word affecting you today? Is it sustaining your life? Is it controlling your thoughts, the way you conduct your business, your home life and even your free time? It is only when we put ourselves under the authority of God's Word and submit to its teaching that we become His disciples.

## Stress

Author unknown

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience,

Raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?"

Answers called out ranged from 20 grams to 500 grams.

The lecturer replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter.

It depends on how long you try to hold it.

If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem.

If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm.

If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance.

In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

He continued,

"And that's the way it is with

stress management.

If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later,

The burden will become increasingly heavy:

And we won't be able to carry on.

As with the glass of water, You have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again.

When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden.

So before you return home tonight, put the burden of work down: don't carry it home.

You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now,

Let them down for a moment if you can."

So, my friend, put down anything that may be a burden to you right now.

Don't pick it up again until after you've rested a while.

## God Is Enough

By Max Lucado

UpWords at OnePlace.com

Let's face it — anxiety and worry have no advantages. They ruin our health, rob us of joy and change nothing. Our day stands no chance against the terrorists of the Land of Anxiety. But Christ offers a worry-bazooka. Remember how He taught us to pray? "Give us this day our daily bread" Matthew 6:11. This simple sentence unveils God's provision plan: live one day at a time.

Worry gives small problems big shadows. Corrie ten Boom said, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; it empties today of its strength." And Romans 8:28 affirms: "Every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good."

Most anxiety stems not from what we need, but from what we want. Philippians 4:4 says, "Delight yourselves in the Lord, yes, find your joy in Him at all times!"

If God is enough, you'll always have enough.

## '48 Days To The Work You Love'

By Dan Miller

"Each area of our lives requires us to make deposits of success. Tiny withdrawals with no deposits will lead to physical, spiritual and emotional bankruptcy in relationships, jobs and finances. In times of crisis the area of most pain gets most of our attention, but by making extra deposits in other areas, we can bounce back to success in our most depleted accounts."

"The fruits of a fulfilling life ... are mainly by-products of doing something we enjoy, with excellence, rather than things we can seek directly."

*SEPTEMBER: CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH*

*More than 12,000 children nationwide will be diagnosed with cancer this year. I'd like to flag this month in honor of Belle Mitchell, Carson Dooley, Jacob Dubois...*



Photo courtesy of Alan Griffith

(L to r) Alma Torres (Russell County Child Advocacy Center), Karen Defenbaugh (WMU director at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Phenix City), Lynn Hammock (CAC director), Alan Griffith (Emmanuel Baptist pastor) and Rhonda Cauthen (Emmanuel Baptist children's ministry) hold teddy bears donated to the CAC by Emmanuel Baptist.

# A teddy bear to hug

## Phenix City's Emmanuel reaches local children through teddy bear ministry

When Alan Griffith, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Phenix City, called Lynn Hammock, executive director of the Russell County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and offered teddy bears to children who visit the center, it didn't take long for Hammock's response to be "of course."

Approximately 150 children walk through the doors of the CAC to be interviewed for allegations of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse and/or severe maltreatment and neglect. After every interview a child gets to go

to the shelf in the CAC conference room and pick out a stuffed animal to take home with him or her. It is one way the CAC tries to provide comfort to those who come to the center to deal with issues that most don't want to admit even happen, CAC officials explained.

### Sense of security

The stuffed animals provide a sense of security and also remind the children that no matter what, there are people who care about them. Some returning children have had the same teddy bear they picked out months and years prior.

Members of Emmanuel Baptist want to impact the children of their community with the love of Jesus, and the teddy bear ministry is a way to do that, Griffith said. The church also partners with Jack Hughston Hospital in Phenix City to provide teddy bears to children as needed.

"It is our hope that the teddy bears will bring some comfort at a critical point in [a child's] life and open the door for continued ministry opportunities," Griffith said.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — A version of this article first appeared in the Phenix City newspaper, The Citizen of East Alabama.*

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—Sara Evans  
Singer/Songwriter—

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# Family Matters

## FINDING HOME




**F**or Michael, home was a van. . . many times parked at truck stops and rest areas. And if that wasn't horrible enough, this 15-year-old boy was the primary caregiver to his little sister and brother for years. Their mother was frequently gone for days at a time leaving the terrified children to survive on their own. They never knew when their mom was coming back or what condition she might be in when she did return.

Can you imagine this childhood? No stability. . . no security. . . no love.

Thankfully, when the authorities discovered their situation, Michael, Jennifer and Skip were brought to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes.

After years of living with fear and uncertainty, changing schools every year, and never knowing a parent's love, their lives started to change. And your support helped make that change possible.

House parents John and Susan Davis gave Michael and his siblings the stability, the security and the love they so desperately needed.

Still these kids were facing a new school once again. John and Susan were especially anxious for them and had been praying their first day of school would go well.

Michael's response was an answer to those prayers. This teenage boy walked in after school and threw his arms around Susan. Then he said, "For the first time in my life I don't have to worry. I know when I come home you'll be waiting on me."

I hope you'll continue supporting abandoned and abused children like Michael with a gift for their back-to-school needs.

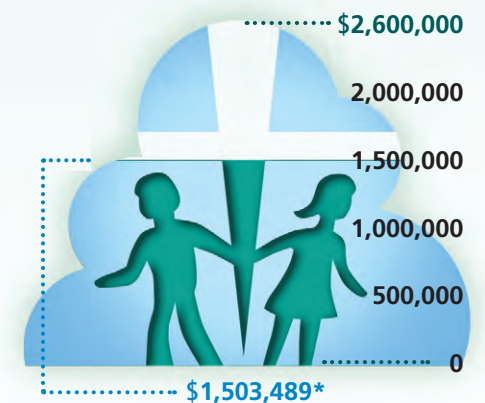
They don't have to change schools again, but they, along with all our other children, need backpacks, clothes, shoes, lunch boxes, pencils, paper, computers and other school supplies. We also encourage our children to participate in extracurricular activities like band or sports, which can add to the costs.

Michael, Jennifer and Skip are looking forward to the start of school this year. They finally have stability, security and love in their lives. They know that no matter what happens at school, John and Susan will always be there ready with a hug.

Your support makes it possible for Alabama's hurting children to know God's love, to be protected, nurtured and restored.

Two years ago, Michael was living in a van. Because of your gifts, he now has a stable home with loving parents. Will you give Michael and the other children we serve the supplies they'll need for a new school year? You can give online at [www.alabamachild.org](http://www.alabamachild.org).

### 2012 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

\* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.

## Social Issues Go Social

If you've connected with our Children's Homes or Pathways Professional Counseling social media accounts, you may have noticed common themes running through the Facebook posts and Twitter tweets. We have decided to focus on a general issue each month in our ministry pages, and to focus on specific child and family issues through the Pathways pages.

Each month will also feature a Photo Face Off between our two staff photographers relating to our ABCH topic.

Be sure to friend us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter so you can receive insights, news, practical tips and more on each topic. And please let us know if you have a topic you'd like to see us address.

#### September Topics:


ABCH: Having a Christian Home  
 Pathways: Sexual Addiction: The Problem, The Root, & The Solution


#### October Topics:

ABCH: Service to Others  
 Pathways: Boundaries

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 9

## Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

### LIVING IN HOLINESS

#### 1 Peter 1:13-25

Our future inheritance with Jesus is an incentive to live in holiness now. The inheritance promised to followers of Jesus should motivate us to set our hope entirely on our future reward, to live in fear of the God who redeemed us at the cost of His own Son and to love one another fervently.

#### Because God Is Holy (13-16)

We should live in holiness because God is holy. Have a disciplined mind. Outlook determines outcome and attitude determines action. A Christian who is looking for the return of Jesus has a greater motivation for present obedience than a Christian who ignores the Lord's return. We are to set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the return of Jesus.

Hope will not become a reality without disciplined thinking. Thinking in a new way does not happen automatically. It requires effort, concentration and intentionality. We are to be sober-minded. We are to live life with constant awareness of God as we anticipate the Second Coming of Jesus.

Not only must we discipline our lives; we must also deny our former lusts. No one ever meets Jesus and stays the same. Peter had no conception of a Christian who merely gave mental assent to doctrines. Biblical regeneration changes you at the very core of your being. Children inherit the nature of their parents. God is holy; therefore, as His children, we should live holy lives.

But while living on this earth Christians have to fight the desires of sin. So we are called to be obedient children, separated from evil in all we do. We are commanded to be holy, for that accords with the character of God who is holy and has called believers to Himself. Everything we do should reflect the holiness of God.

#### Because God Is Judge (17)

We should live in holiness because God is Judge. As God's children we need to be serious about sin and holy living. Father God is a holy and righteous Father. He will not

compromise with sin and neither should we. Fear is not a paralyzing terror but a fear of God's discipline and fatherly displeasure.

In view of the fact that Father God lovingly disciplines His children today and will judge their works in the future, we ought to cultivate an attitude of godly fear. This is not the cringing fear of a slave before a master, but the loving reverence of a child before his father. We should live in holiness because God will judge our deeds.

#### Because of Our Redemption (18-21)

We should live in holiness because Father God has redeemed us with the precious blood of Jesus. God's love for us as demonstrated on the cross is the highest motive for holy living. Peter reminded his readers of their salvation experience. First he reminded them of what they were before meeting Jesus. They had been slaves to sin living empty lives. Second he reminded them of what Christ did for them on the cross. Jesus had paid the price required to set them free by shedding His own blood for them.

Jesus' death was an appointment, not an accident, because it had been foreknown before the foundation of the world. From the human perspective Jesus was cruelly murdered. From the divine perspective Jesus laid down His life for sinners. Christians should live in holy fear because they are deeply loved and should not despise that love.

#### Because of Our Purification (22-25)

We should live in holiness because of our purification. Jesus forgives us, cleanses us and changes us. Having been purified, we ought to love one another earnestly from a pure heart. This means to go as far as you can and then keep on going. It means that our love for one another is to know no limits.

Love for our brothers and sisters is costly and inconvenient, but it is what God expects of each of His children. Our ability to love is rooted in our salvation while our activity of love is revealed in sacrifice. The Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts and the Scriptures change our nature because the Word of God is powerful and eternal.

## Bible Studies for Life By David Hogg Academic Dean at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

### HIGH EXPECTATIONS

#### Matthew 5:17-22, 27-28, 31-34a, 38-39, 43-44, 48

#### Affirm Scripture's Authority (17-19)

After reading the first 16 verses of this chapter, someone might begin to wonder if Jesus came to deliver a whole new set of rules or laws by which His disciples are to live. Is He replacing the law? Is He declaring the Old Testament obsolete? No. In fact Jesus anticipates this very concern in these verses where he states unequivocally not only that He is the fulfillment of the law and prophets, but also that He is not setting aside or diminishing the law in any way. What the law sets out, He is accomplishing; that to which the law pointed, He is fulfilling.

Perhaps the two most important words in this portion of the Sermon on the Mount are "fulfill" and "accomplish." These two words speak to the twofold nature of Christ's work. On the one hand He is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament ("the law and the prophets"). Throughout the Old Testament there is a thread of expectation for the Messiah that ties everything together. The Messiah will be the one who restores peace, hope and life and finally eradicates strife and death. On the other hand Jesus is the only one who can accomplish all that God has laid out in His Word, and Jesus does it on our behalf.

The implications of these two parts of Jesus' life and ministry are far-reaching, and among them is the fact that Jesus did not replace, supersede or go around Scripture. Jesus obeyed God's Word. What greater affirmation could we have of Scripture's authority than that the Son of God Himself lived under the Word of God?

#### Rise Above Mediocrity (20, 48)

The standard to which Christ's disciples are called is very high indeed. This is made clear throughout chapter five, but especially in vv. 20 and 48. How can our righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? Were they not the most fastidious and ardent keepers of the law? We read elsewhere

in the Gospels, for example, that they were careful to weigh out all their wealth to ensure that they tithed 10 percent. And what of Jesus' command that we be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect? Surely Jesus was exaggerating?

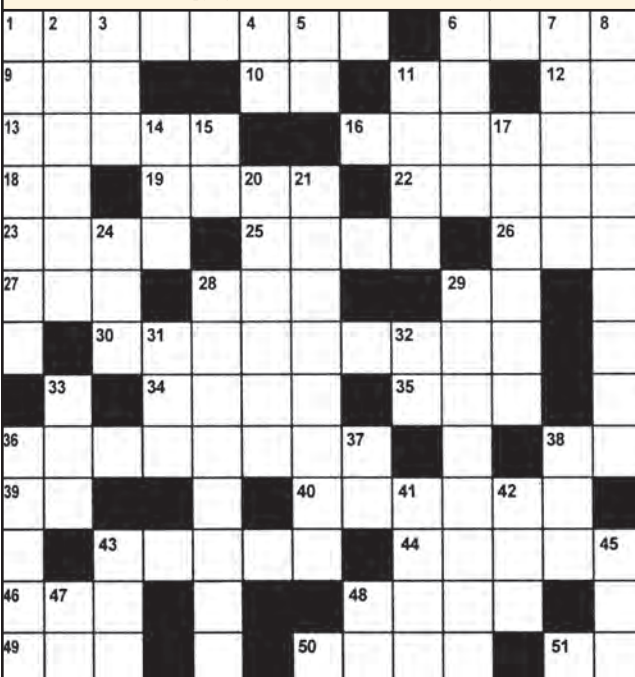
No, Jesus was not exaggerating. Whereas the Pharisees were relying on their own ability, their own righteousness, their own standards of religious adherence, Jesus points us to Himself. After all, as we just saw, Jesus came to fulfill the law, and He did. The statement that our righteousness should surpass that of the Pharisees is meant to throw us back to Christ, expressing our inadequacy. Even a Pharisee would have to pause and ask how he could surpass his own righteousness if that were the only way of salvation. Jesus' words force us all to face our own inadequacy and utter need of a righteousness alien to ourselves. We need Him who became sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

#### Go Beyond Superficiality (21-22, 27-28, 31-34a, 38-39, 43-44)

All of this leads us to recognize that true righteousness, the righteousness that God demands, is a matter of His work in our lives from the inside out and not a matter of us trying harder. Read through chapter five again, and this time ask yourself what Jesus is requiring of His listeners. What you will find is that Jesus is requiring grace. The emphasis is not on the one who causes offense or trouble, but on the one who is on the receiving end of an offense. Will you respond to wrongdoing in anger or with grace? Will you blame the scantily clad woman for lusting after her or will you respond to temptation with the power of God's grace? If someone hits you, will you lash out in return or follow in the footsteps of the Lamb of God who was crucified for you without complaint? A mature believer is filled by God's grace, and that is what moves them beyond mediocrity and superficial faith.

## Christian Crossword

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### Across

- With him on the sacred \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Pet. 1:18 NIV)
- And to brotherly kindness, \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Pet. 1:7 NIV)
- Absent. (abbr.)
- Division of Scripture.
- \_\_\_\_\_, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)
- Biblical beast used in the fields.
- Our Savior \_\_\_\_ Christ.
- Combining form meaning "having fruit."
- Hebrew combining form for "God."
- Thy word is a \_\_\_\_ unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
- Draw out.
- A more \_\_\_\_ word of prophecy. (2 Pet. 1:19)
- Spoken.
- Religion. (abbr.)
- Half of a kind of fly.
- Not amateur.
- A movie rating.
- No prophecy of the \_\_\_\_ is of any private interpretation.

- Indefinite article.
- He, she and \_\_\_\_.
- Our \_\_\_\_ Jesus Christ.
- There came such a \_\_\_\_ to him. (2 Pet. 1:17)
- From the \_\_\_\_ glory. (2 Pet. 1:17)
- Lieutenant (abbr.)
- \_\_\_\_ else.
- Our Lord Jesus \_\_\_\_.
- Received from God \_\_\_\_ honour and \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Pet. 1:17)
- They are all gone \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 14:3)
- Self.
- Food regimen.
- Thy \_\_\_\_ and thy staff. (Ps. 23:4)
- From his old \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Pet. 1:9)
- When \_\_\_\_ made known unto you. (2 Pet. 1:16)
- Reserve. (abbr.)
- Great and \_\_\_\_ promises. (2 Pet. 1:4)
- Through faith ... obtained \_\_\_\_\_. (Heb. 11:33)
- Quahog is another word for a \_\_\_\_m.
- Direction.
- If any of you do \_\_\_\_ from the truth. (James 5:19)

- The \_\_\_\_ and coming of our Lord. (2 Pet. 1:16)
- Blood factor.
- Company (British abbr.)
- He prayed ... that it might not \_\_\_\_\_. (James 5:17)
- Make all \_\_\_\_\_. (Mark 6:39)
- Holy men of \_\_\_\_ spake. (2 Pet. 1:21)
- Were \_\_\_\_ witnesses. (2 Pet. 1:16)
- \_\_\_\_ ye unto all the world. (Mark 16:15)
- Roman numeral 501.



# Set free

## Oklahoma Baptists help rescue girls from human trafficking in Africa

**T**raveling T-shirts have raised enough money to free 20 girls from human trafficking in Ghana, West Africa.

A combination of events occurred to make it possible for these girls to receive a life of independence after being involved in slavery, some since the age of 5.

It started with a T-shirt company that incorrectly printed an order for I.D. Ministries, headed by Courtney Bullard. To correct the mistake the company gave the Tulsa, Okla.-based ministry 125 free shirts.

"We were praying about what to do with the free shirts," Bullard said. "I was reading in the Bible the parable of the talents and tried to come up with a way to multiply the shirts."

Bullard's church, Southern Hills Baptist Church, Tulsa, where her husband, Steve, is youth minister, has taken missions trips to Ghana on an ongoing basis since 2008. While in the country they were made aware of a practice that goes on there called *trokosi*.

"It is a small practice in the tribal life with a few thousand girls caught up in it," Steve said. "Ghana has outlawed the practice, but the law isn't enforced."

He explained that back in the deep bush, if someone in a family commits a crime, no matter how insignificant, to pay for the crime one of the daughters must be given to a *trokosi* priest, who takes control of her. She becomes a slave to the priest, although he does not take care of her. The family still has to support her.

The girl may work in the fields or may be a sex slave, but if she bears a child she must take responsibility to care for the child, Steve said. The priest does not take any parental ownership of the child.

He noted that different ministries have tried to strike a deal with the priests and shrine owners to buy the girls.

"Sometimes they will pay the priests in assets such as cattle to replace income these girls provided," Steve disclosed. "A lot of the priests want to get out of it. It's just tradition, they know it's illegal and they are afraid of getting caught."

So Courtney, with the idea of raising money to buy these girls out of slavery, had the free T-shirts printed with "Buy this shirt to help stop slavery." The shirts, sold last year at Super Summer at Oklahoma Baptist University, cost \$15 each. The premise is that you wear the T-shirt with another shirt underneath and people literally buy the shirt off your back.

"There's a QR code, which you can run your phone over, and it tells you where the proceeds from the shirt go," Courtney explained. "We tracked the sales on Facebook and



Photo courtesy of Baptist Messenger

Rescued girls from Ghana, Africa, spend time with staff and volunteers at the Frankadua Baptist Vocational Training Center.

found the shirts traveled lots of places — Florida, North Carolina, California. It was interesting to see how much each shirt would bring in."

Through that effort, enough money was raised — about \$2,000 — to free 20 girls.

Kamie Sager, a member of First Baptist Church, Ardmore, Okla., said buying the shirts was exciting for her because she felt she was contributing to something that had purpose. She said she took one of the shirts to a retreat, hoping to sell it to one of the students.

"But when no one wanted to buy it, I was crushed," admitted Sager. "As I was feeling defeated, I discovered one of the sponsors wanted to buy the shirt. When I sold it, I knew we were united as one mind with one purpose, and it was as if I was physically a part of the Body."

Another shirt Sager bought was purchased by Oklahoma Rep. Pat Ownbey from House District 48. "I believe the shirt is an effective way to raise money as well as awareness," Ownbey said. "These shirts have been a great way of calling attention to a problem that most people aren't even aware of."

### Closing loopholes

Ownbey, also a member of First, Ardmore, said a bill was signed into law during the last legislative session that closed loopholes traffickers often slip through.

"I'm proud to be a part of a legislature that realizes the importance of attacking this issue head-on through effective legislation," he added. "I believe these shirts are a tool in God's hands to bring about freedom in places that have only known slavery."

This year at Super Summer, Courtney gave a report every Tuesday night on how much money was raised and told the students that they played a major role in helping to rescue the girls in Africa.

"The place erupted when I told them how they had helped," Courtney said.

On one of the trips to Africa the Bullards visited Frankadua Baptist Vocational Training Center, which takes the girls after they are rescued from the priests and gives them a life of independence through a three-year program. The girls are taught about Jesus and educated academically and vocationally.

"The girls can choose a trade, such as sewing, catering or making fabric, and at the end of three years they are given seed money to help them get started in a career," Courtney said. "If they become a seamstress, they may be given a sewing machine so they can live independently and don't go back to the former lifestyle."

Courtney emphasized that when the girls are taken from

the priests, the priests sign a treaty that they are not going to get another girl to replace her.

"It's not like you are feeding the system," Courtney said. "They are very superstitious about appeasing the gods, so they believe if a transaction is made for the girl, the debt has been paid, and the priests are happy."

Steve said negotiating the girls away from the priests is a fluid and ongoing situation.

"So far, we have eight girls who have been rescued and we are working on 12 more," he said.

In all of this the Bullards said the Lord has given them a vision of building a home modeled after the home in Frankadua.

"We already have the land and plans for the building drawn up," Courtney said. "We are now in the fund-raising process."

The new ministry — called Pearl House — is from the parable of the merchant who sold all he had to purchase the pearl, Courtney said.

She said when she was in Winneba, Ghana, where the home will be built, last March, she realized they were going to need an American living in the house.

"I didn't know anyone who would go to live in Africa," she said. "But God did."

Steve took some of his youth on a missions trip to Memphis, Tenn., and met a youth minister who is 33 years old and single.

She told Steve that God told her she was to move to Africa and work with teenage girls, and there would be some sort of home she would be living in. She did not know what that meant until she met Steve.

Courtney said Steve is currently looking for a house to rent so they can begin taking in girls while they are in the process of raising funds to build Pearl House. She said they are looking for churches and individuals to partner with them or sponsor a girl.

"We also need people willing to donate items to furnish the home once it's built," she said.

Courtney said proceeds from bracelets sold at Super Summer this year will go to help build Pearl House.

"We have collaborated with Kairos10 ([www.kairos10.com](http://www.kairos10.com))," Courtney said. "With each bracelet sold, a mosquito net is purchased and profits go (to) the Pearl House."

Also a percentage of the sale of "The Same Page Book" ([www.thesamepagebook.com](http://www.thesamepagebook.com)), which Courtney coauthored with Shauna Pilgreen, will go to the Pearl House.

She added that the "Buy This Shirt" campaign will be kicked off again in 2013.

For more information on rescuing the girls or on Pearl House, contact the Bullards at [info@idministries.com](mailto:info@idministries.com). (BP)

# Spiritual encourager

By Bill Sorrell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

## Montgomery Biscuits pitcher Schenk desires to be 'God's salt and light on planet Earth'

**D**uring a game last year against Jacksonville, Montgomery Biscuits pitcher Neil Schenk gave up a fly ball that sailed straight up in the air. Attempting to catch it, Schenk fell over the mound flat on his back.

"I got knocked out for a second but the out was made. I really didn't care about the embarrassment," said Schenk, who seldom falls flat on his face.

With a 3-0 record, a 3.40 ERA and seven June appearances without giving up a run, Schenk has been a stable reliever for a Biscuits team that is trying to earn a South Division playoff spot in the Southern League. They have had the best record in the league since the end of April.

"He is a solid left-handed pitcher," said Montgomery catcher Mark Thomas. "He is kind of like a set-up guy that comes in and sets the table for a bunch of our closers." He also is "in touch" with God, he said. "Faith is definitely a big part of his life and his career."

Schenk (pronounced Shaynk) said a reliever getting wins is sometimes about being in the right place at the right time.

"As a reliever you go out there and help the team win. Sometimes you pitch well and get a loss and sometimes you pitch poorly and get a win. Wins and losses for relievers are not everything. A reliever shouldn't be banishing a record unless he is a long reliever or a closer," he said.

### Putting things in perspective

For Schenk it is about perspective.

After a good, bad or mediocre day on the mound, he is able to put the past behind him and focus on what he needs to fix, whether it is consistently hurling strikes with off-speed pitches or maintaining stamina when he is behind the count.

"You just have to get over the bad stuff that happens on the field and find a technique and work at your game and dedicate yourself to the right ways of throwing. You compete the best you can and try to perform your role," he said.

One of his roles is being a spiritual encourager to his team, a desire to be "God's salt and light on planet Earth."

"God's glory is more important to me than anything. To further His Kingdom, to be a witness for Christ and be obedient to Him, you don't have to do anything world-changing or headline-making. It's important to share Christ with others."

Schenk's father, David Schenk, shared Christ with him.

"He opened up eternity for me by the things he showed me in his life," said the younger Schenk, 26. "God has used him more than anybody else to bring me closer to Christ."

Neil was in the sixth grade when David and his mother, Kathy Schenk, and sister, now Rachel Campbell, came home from their church, Bellevue Baptist, Memphis, Tenn.

In the back of the car David began to tell them about "giving our lives to Christ, repenting of our sins and deliverance from God's wrath and punishment from sin. Christ's sacrifice on the cross was enough for our salvation. It's a real thing and not a figment of some religious person's imagination. That is when I made my profession of faith

and was adopted into the family of God. I was a little guy but I knew I had done plenty of bad things that made me a sinner and needed God's grace."

Neil was baptized at Bellevue on Jan. 11, 1998.

A contract carpenter in Memphis, David earned a Ph.D. in theology and wanted to be a seminary professor. He has passed on his love for the Bible and books by theologians to his son.

Neil's favorite book in the Bible is Colossians. His favorite passage is Colossians 1:19-22.

"Jesus is everything. It talks about [how] all the fullness of God is in Christ. It talks about Christ's sacrifice and how it is only [being] in Christ that gives us a chance to live life. All things consist in Christ. Everything is made for Him and nothing would have been made without Him. There is nothing I can do to earn or deserve salvation. It's all 100 percent Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins. It's His love. That is 100 percent why I live and breathe."

Bible verses John 14:6 and John 10:10 also are important to him. "He is the way, the truth and the life. He said 'I came to give you life and that you would have it more abundantly.' That is what faith in Christ is all about."

Books by John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, John Piper and Puritan authors have influenced Schenk's thinking. He commits to daily Scripture memory, taking to heart Psalm 119:11.

"Having it ready for certain stressful situations in life is how you grow in your faith," he said.

Montgomery pitcher Shane Dyer said Schenk does not waver in his faith. "That is what each one of us see and we respect him dearly for it. He just carries himself in such a high manner."

Pitcher Scott Shuman calls Schenk a rock.

"Playing minor league ball, everybody has their ups and downs. He is always there when you need somebody to talk to when we are struggling, whether it is on the mound or spiritually. He is one of those guys who obviously has a great passion for the Lord. He lives his life the right way and is a good role model for other people."

Said Schenk, "I think any career is a platform to be salt and light to believers. I hope in the way I act (people know that I am a Christian). Christ said by your fruits you will know them. Believers are different."

Schenk also has a skill that helps him relate to a group of people others cannot: he is fluent in Spanish. A summa cum laude graduate of the University of Memphis with a 3.9 GPA, Schenk majored in Spanish. He teaches his Hispanic teammates English concepts and grammar. He wants to use his second language as a witnessing tool, even though with red hair and a ruddy complexion, Schenk (6 foot 3 inches, 220 pounds) looks more Scottish than Hispanic.



Neil Schenk

Photo by Marvin Gentry

"Spanish is one of my hobbies (playing the piano and guitar are others). Everybody is always surprised to see me being able to speak it. It's something about me a lot of people don't know. I have a lot of fun with it," he said.

At the University of Memphis Schenk learned he could pursue a career in pro baseball. During his senior season he first learned how to pitch to hitters.

"Everything kind of fell into place. The Lord was really good to me that season," said Schenk, who was a Florida State League Mid-Season All-Star in 2010. He had a 1.72 ERA with Peoria in the Arizona Fall League that year.

What has surprised him is that pro players "fail big time. Every person at the beginning of their career becomes disillusioned. People can be beaten. Generally nobody is head and shoulders above everybody else. It's a pretty even game."

### Even-keeled attitude

Montgomery outfielder Brad Coon said Schenk brings an even-keeled attitude when he enters the game. "He gives a calmness," he said. "He is not one of those guys who is up and down when he goes out there. He is going to be a solid performer every time."

Schenk made a career-high 46 appearances in 2011 and during 10 appearances from April through May that year pitched 19 straight scoreless innings.

"He gives us quality innings when we need them," Dyer said. "You can't get enough of those guys."

A Conference USA All-Academic team member in 2008, Schenk takes a cerebral approach to his game.

"He is one of the most mentally sound people I know," Dyer noted.

Pitcher Matt Buschmann added, "He is an intelligent guy who brings conversation to the field that goes beyond baseball. It expands your horizon a little bit. It's good to wrap your head around something bigger than this."

Whether or not he plays in a league bigger than Double-A, Schenk said it is an honor to put on a pro jersey. "I wake up every day thanking the Lord that I am doing what I want to do." 📖

## — EXCLUSIVE ONLINE EDITION FEATURE —



Photo by Frank Michael McCormack

An Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteer helps remove a fallen tree on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

## Alabama's 'chainsaw maniacs' aid in Isaac cleanup at New Orleans Seminary

By Frank Michael McCormack  
New Orleans Seminary

A team of about 25 disaster relief workers from Alabama were hard at work on the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) campus, removing debris and downed trees scattered by Hurricane Isaac. The team arrived Aug. 31, just over a day after the winds from Isaac finally died down.

Hurricane Isaac made its first landfall Tuesday evening, Aug. 28, in extreme southern Plaquemines Parish, La., about 80 miles south of New Orleans with winds of 80 miles per hour. The stubbornly slow-moving storm then moved west, back over water, before coming ashore south-east of Houma, La.

The warm Gulf of Mexico water fueled the hurricane, which pumped wind, storm surge and rain into the region for close to two days. The relentless winds downed trees and power lines all across Louisiana, at one point leaving 769,000 residents with no power, including the New Orleans Seminary campus and the surrounding Gentilly neighborhood.

The team of Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers from Calhoun and Cleburne Baptist associations and the Tallassee area arrived Friday afternoon and quickly got to work. The team was well-experienced, with members who had volunteered in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, almost seven years to the day prior, as well as other hurricane recoveries through the years and the April 2011 tornadoes that swept across Alabama.

"They call us, we go," said Sammy Freeman, one of the leaders of the team.

### Serving nationwide

Freeman said he got his start doing disaster relief seven years ago after Hurricane Katrina. Since then, he and other team members from Cleburne Association have been all over the country: Cleveland, Ohio, New York City, Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana and North Carolina.

The Cleburne group, made up of three women and six men, started by clearing debris from around the railway that forms the western boundary of the seminary campus. They moved on to downed trees and broken limbs around the campus. By midday Sept. 1, the team was removing a pine tree that was leaned against a faculty house. The team

anticipated moving on to off-campus projects in the Gentilly Woods and Pontchartrain Park neighborhoods soon thereafter.

"When we work, we work hard," Freeman said.

As Freeman's group worked, chainsaws roared from another contingent of the Alabama group just a few houses down as volunteers removed a tree from another faculty house. And at the front of campus, most of the volunteers from Calhoun County worked to remove a pecan tree from behind the seminary's library.

At that work site, Ken Burnham, a trustee for the International Mission Board and member of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, carved up the trunk of the felled tree, while Marc Webb, also of Oxford, cut branches to size.

Judy Luker, a member of Golden Springs Baptist Church, Anniston, was one of the volunteers charged with moving chunks of tree to the street. She said her husband has been involved in disaster relief with Alabama Baptists since the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina seven years ago and has been involved in building churches since 1979. She said his involvement in disaster relief moved her to get involved.

### 'I wanted to be a part of it too'

"He came back so excited that I wanted to be a part of it too, so we got some women involved," she said of the Calhoun County group. "This is the ladies' first trip out of state."

The ladies of the group have done a lot of tornado clean-up work following the April 2011 tornadoes, she said.

John Thomas, associate director of missions for Calhoun Association, said there are in all about 125 trained Southern Baptist disaster relief workers in his association. The current Calhoun team planned to work through Sept. 4, and then reassess to see if more volunteers were needed to continue the work. Thomas was one of the volunteers that did relief work during Katrina.

"It's not near as devastated as in Katrina," Thomas said of Hurricane Isaac's impact on the area, "but there's a lot of trees down."

Thomas said he's glad to roll up his sleeves and work in Jesus' name.

"We just love helping people and showing the love of Jesus," Thomas said.

The volunteers from Alabama, aided by NOBTS church history professor Lloyd Harsch and music professor Greg Woodward and Baton Rouge pastor Anthony Allen, were

relentless, inspiring a nickname from among seminary leaders.

"Like cold water on a hot day, Alabama disaster relief volunteers brought what we needed most," said NOBTS President Chuck Kelley. "Their chain saws are undoing the damage of Isaac with relentless effort. Their nickname on campus is 'chainsaw maniacs' because they keep going and going."

And thanks to that steady, determined work by Alabama Baptists, the seminary campus was ready for classes to resume following the Sept. 3 Labor Day holiday. (Gary D. Myers contributed)



Photo by John Thomas

Alabama Baptist disaster relief volunteers help remove a fallen tree from a home on the seminary campus.