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BP photo

The light touch with which a Bihari girl balances a bowl of water belies the weight she carries. At eight pounds per gallon, the water in the bowl likely tops 30 to 40 pounds. Worse, it must be hand carried to her home several times each day, a trip that ranges from 100 yards to several miles depending on whether some wells have gone dry. It's estimated that 43 million school days are lost worldwide due to lack of clean water and sanitation.

'One Cup of Water'

OneLife changes lives by taking wells, Living Water to Bihar, India

Aaron Blanton rubs the sleep from his eyes as he slides from his bunk on an overnight train to Patna, India. The trip, scheduled at nine hours, has now dragged on for more than 13.

Worse, Blanton's suitcase didn't make his flight into New Delhi. He's been living in the same pair of clothes for three days.

It sounds like a travel horror story from his time on tour as the drummer for SONICFLOOD or, more recently,

frontman for the Christian rock group By the Tree. Aside from a few wrinkles and a bad case of bed head, however, Blanton seems ready to rock. But it's not a gig that has brought the 32-year-old Christian musician more than 10,000 miles from his California home — it's clean water.

Blanton is part of OneLife, a student-driven International Mission Board movement that challenges young adults to use their "one life" to make a difference in others' lives for Christ's glory, meeting physical and spiritual needs around the globe. Specifically Blanton wants to raise awareness for OneLife's "One Cup of Water" project. The idea is simple — repair or replace broken, hand-pumped wells in 1,200 rural villages across Bihar, India's poorest state.

The payoff? Providing clean drinking water to thousands of men,

women and children living in absolute poverty.

It's a cheap fix, at least by Western standards. Before heading to a nearby village for a firsthand look at the problem, Blanton stops at a roadside plumbing store (shack). He emerges with a pair of brand-new water pump handles: essentially 2-foot long cast-iron bars. Broken handles are a common problem among village wells in the area, rendering otherwise good pumps useless. Together the handles cost 400 rupees. That's about \$8 each — less than the cost of a movie ticket.

"We're talking under 25 bucks to give a village clean water. That's amazing," Blanton says with a grin. He lugs the handles to the SUV and the OneLife team presses on. The village is at least an hour's drive over rough, sometimes crowded, rural roads that wind through mustard

farms and rice fields. It's beautiful country, and Blanton's excitement is palpable.

"Every time I come here it's the same impression — that it is possible to change lives in a place that seems impossible. That's what God's grace does," he says. "Water is one of those essential ingredients. ... But they just don't have the means."

"I hear the question, 'Why can't they do it themselves?' a lot as I get into these kinds of humanitarian projects. But that's not what the Bible says. ... It says if they ask, give. It says if we see a need, fill it. ... Why wouldn't we want to help? That's my question back."

As Blanton's team pulls into the village, a swarm of curious Biharis greets them. A rusty, green water pump stands ready, but its handle is missing.

(See 'Clean,' page 12)

COMMENT

The Importance of a Brown Bag

It is 2:35 Friday afternoon. Excited first- and second-graders begin bursting through the doors of Tri-C Elementary School in Carterville, Ill., eager to begin their weekend. Clutched tightly in the hands of many of the children are brown paper bags. Even at their young age the children know the bags are important. They hold most of the food the children will eat over the weekend.

According to an article in the current issue of *OnMission* Magazine, a publication of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the food is provided by GUM Drop Ministries, which is associated with First Baptist Church, Carterville. GUM stands for “God Use Me.”

A young women’s Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) group at the church recognized that children who depended on free or reduced-price school breakfast and lunches during the week often went hungry over the weekend. “Our economy is pretty shabby,” said Amy Simpson, leader of GUM Drop Ministries, as she reflected on her southern Illinois area. “There are few jobs here for parents.”

Twelve children received bags of child-friendly food the first week the ministry operated. That was four years ago. Now the ministry provides food for more than 1,300 students in 34 schools across six area counties. And the ministry has spread beyond the church. Most nights between 40 and 60 people work to prepare the bags of food. More than 1,000 volunteers have participated in the program coming from a variety of churches and denominations.

The SBC World Hunger Fund helped GUM Drop Ministries get started and continues to pay for some of the food distributed.

Alabama has similar problems to Carterville. On Aug. 23 an official with the United Way of Alabama told a group of concerned citizens he was glad school was back in session because it meant hundreds, if not thousands, of area children would no longer go hungry from lack of food. The official related how United Way receives countless calls every year as school nears an end from parents asking how they can find food for their children during the summer months.

In Alabama, like in southern Illinois, “our economy is pretty shabby.” And there is a direct correlation between unemployment, hunger and poverty.

Last week’s report from the U.S. Census Bureau offered some encouragement. Poverty declined in Alabama from 17.2 percent in 2010 to 15.49 percent in 2011. Still, almost one in six



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

Alabamians live in poverty. For children, it is about one in four. Both figures are higher than the national average.

The median income of Americans edged up in 2011 but is still below where it was in 2008. Alabama’s median income is considerably below the national average.

Reports about hunger are not as encouraging. In 2011, 24.5 percent of Alabama residents were “food insecure.” That is, they could not afford enough food to eat, according to the Food Research and Action Center.

‘Very low food security’

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Household Food Security study found 7.1 percent of Alabama households experienced “very low food security” during 2011. That means there were times each month when one or more persons experienced hunger because they could not afford any food to eat.

Alabama was the second most food insecure state in the nation in 2011, the study said.

Food insecurity has increased dramatically in the last five years in Alabama, growing from 226,000 households to 317,000 households. The number of “very low food secure” families has more than doubled — from 62,000 to 128,000.

Participation in school feeding programs also grew as incomes fell and hunger increased. During the 2010–2011 school year, 376,942 students received free or reduced price lunches in Alabama. That is up almost 10 percent from the 2005–2006 school year. Participation in the school breakfast program has grown from 156,678 children five years ago to 184,620 last year, an increase of 17.8 percent.

Still Alabamians go hungry, including children and senior adults. A program like GUM Drop Ministries is needed in many Alabama communities.

In the *OnMission* article, NAMB reported assisting 2,000 different hunger ministries that resulted in providing more than 5 million meals during the last year. That was made possible by the World Hunger Fund offering sponsored by Southern Baptists. This year’s World Hunger Fund offering emphasis date is Sunday, Oct. 14.

Eighty percent of the receipts from the special offering are directed to the International Mission Board for use in hunger and general relief projects worldwide. NAMB receives 20 percent of the offering to use in the United States and Canada for projects such as GUM Drop Ministries. Every dollar of the offering goes for direct service. There are no administrative or promotional charges against the receipts.

Alabama gave \$863,227.13 to the World Hunger Fund offering in 2011, about 10 percent of the total SBC amount.

In addition to contributing to the World Hunger Fund offering, many Alabama Baptist churches provide food pantries and other food-related ministries. All of these ministries are important. Jesus said when we minister to the “least of these” it is as if we are ministering directly to Him (Matt. 25:40). The poor, the hungry, the hurting are usually numbered among the voiceless. They have no lobbyist in Washington, no one looking after their needs. They need people like Amy Simpson and the young women’s WMU group at First, Carterville, who see as God sees and who respond in loving care.

In addition to needing people willing to provide direct service in the name of Jesus, the “least of these” also need advocates willing to make sure government programs focus on the needs of the hungry, the hurting and the poor.

A study by Pew Charitable Trusts found that, on average, government-related programs make up about 93 percent of all hunger-related assistance. All local food pantries, food-recycling programs and meal-serving programs combined make up about 7 percent of total food aid. The finding is not surprising considering the federal government contributed \$180 million just to pay for Alabama’s school lunch program, to say nothing of the breakfast program and other federal programs.

Hungry and hurting people need Christians to work through organizations like Bread for the World to help the government express the compassion of its citizens and to ensure that government programs meet real needs and do not turn into private boondoggles for some special interest.

GUM Drop Ministries depends on the direct service of its volunteers. It depends on the corporate support of groups like Southern Baptists through the World Hunger Fund offering. And it depends on the advocacy of Christians who help shape government policies for regional food banks from which comes much of the food distributed. Each is important. Each is necessary. Each is a part of caring for the “least of these.”

So pray for the hungry and hurting in your community and around the world. Give to the World Hunger Fund offering. Find a place to demonstrate God’s love in direct service. And advocate for the needs of the “least of these.”

Letters to the Editor

See page 10



"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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Tradition

Annual 'Rose Sunday' marks new academic year at Judson College

Participants in Judson College's 97th annual "Rose Sunday" service Aug. 26 were happy to find a clear morning in Marion as they walked the few blocks from the college to Siloam Baptist Church.

Students donned white gloves and many wore hats for the traditional processional and worship service marking the commencement of the new academic year, which began Aug. 22.

Rose Sunday was first observed Sept. 19, 1915, but has its origins much earlier in a practice begun by the founder and first college president Milo P. Jewett. Jewett underscored the value of worship by walking with students to Siloam every Sunday.

Signature flower

Judson seniors began the day, appropriately in front of Jewett Hall, by passing through a woven ivy chain crafted and held by the underclassmen in their honor — another long-standing tradition at the college. Each senior wore her academic regalia and a single red rose — the college's signature flower.

Judson President David Potts then led the procession to the church for worship.

Members of Siloam Baptist held an early service that day in order to accommodate the Judson students, faculty and staff at the traditional late morning worship time.

As has been his custom in his presidential address, Potts brought laughter from the crowd by read-

ing some "general regulations" from early college catalogues.

Students had to have permission from the principal to leave campus, to receive any magazines or newspapers and to open accounts in Marion. They were allowed to spend no more than 50 cents per month from their "pocket money." Letters were subject to inspection unless written to parents or guardians, and two offenses merited expulsion: dipping snuff and "communicating with unmarried gentlemen."

Further, Potts noted that a regular course in 1911 cost \$20 and board was \$15 per month. Campus dress was rigorously prescribed and students were issued two green, two pink and two white uniforms.

Potts then turned to the purpose of the day, noting that the college's namesake, Ann Judson, is a worthy role model for current students.

Ann Judson née Hasseltine grew up in Salem, Mass., and though raised in a Christian home found Christ in a deeper way at age 16 during the Second Great Awakening. She later recorded in her diary, "When I was thus enabled to commit myself into the hands of Christ, my mind was relieved from that distressing weight which had borne it down for so long a time."

Ann also wrote about a conviction to "try to be useful" in God's work. This conviction bore fruit when she met a Christian teacher named Adoniram Judson. Adoniram and Ann married Feb. 5, 1812, and set sail for India on Feb. 19.



Photo by Bill Mathews

VALUE OF WORSHIP — Judson College senior Chelbie Greenhaw, of Hazel Green, prepares for the processional to Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, with the pinning of a rose.

Theirs was the last ship to leave Salem harbor before the outbreak of the War of 1812. En route to India, the Judsons came to the conviction that immersion baptism as taught by Baptists was correct, so they returned funds to the Congregationalists and asked American Baptists for support. After missionaries were told to leave India, the Judsons sailed for Rangoon, Burma.

Gift of God's Word

"They labored for six years before their first convert," Potts said. "But they proved their genius as linguists, learning and translating one of the most difficult languages in the world, giving the Burmese the gift of God's Word."

Potts noted that Ann kept her husband alive when he was imprisoned and accused of being a British agent. She visited him daily and bribed the guards to provide food for him. Throughout those

years of suffering Ann repeated her motto, "Bless God and take courage."

Potts said the Judsons' continuing influence is seen at the college where the first Burmese student, Ruth Aung Ra Saga, is from the Kachin tribe. Ninety percent of the people of the tribe claim Christ as Savior. Saga also graduated from Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham and is now teaching in the seminary in her tribal area.

Another Burmese student, a current senior, Sau Nam, spent the summer ministering to Burmese and other nationals in Nashville. And the college welcomed its fourth Burmese student, Ja Htoi, in this academic session.

"[Many Burmese] live eternally because of God's grace and the sacrifice of Ann Hasseltine Judson," Potts said. "What's in a name? In our case, a great deal — bless God and take courage!" (Judson)

Alabama Baptist child care teams assist following Isaac



Photo courtesy of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief

KEEPING AN EYE ON PRECIOUS CARGO — Members of an Alabama Baptist disaster relief child care team entertain a child at a FEMA center in Chalmette, La., while the parents work through questionnaires and interviews for assistance to deal with damage done by Hurricane Isaac.

Two Alabama Baptist child care teams were among the final few disaster relief groups from the state assisting in Louisiana and Mississippi following Hurricane Isaac's landfall Aug. 29. They served Sept. 11-19 at a FEMA center in Chalmette, La. Three mud-out teams were still working in Mississippi at press time.

While Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists nationwide do what they do as a calling to minister, the efforts continue to gain attention from those outside the denomination, the latest being Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. She called North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell to thank Southern Baptist volunteers who have diligently served the affected area.

"She called to say how much she appreciates everything [the] volunteers are doing and to acknowledge that our efforts are a key part of the response," Ezell said. "The investment Southern Baptists have made in disaster relief over the years has helped us become a key partner in times of crisis. I am grateful for all of our partners who make this happen. We know that many needs will be met and that ultimately many lives will be impacted with the gospel." (TAB, BP)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

'Default standard' contemporary worship style may not be only option for success

It's a recurring scenario in America's Christian congregations. As members grapple with their church's future — eager to increase attendance or renew spiritual energy — one suggestion inevitably emerges: it's time to start a contemporary worship service. The assumption that guitar- and drum-driven worship songs and a casually dressed preacher are essential to vibrant churches goes largely unchallenged in American Protestantism. And so does its corollary: Churches that retain traditional worship will decline and die.

About half of Protestant churches in America use electric guitars and drums in worship, up from 35 percent 12 years ago, according to a 2011 study of more than 10,000 churches by Faith Communities Today. That figure approaches 60 percent among evangelical churches generally and among all churches in the South, reported the research group.

But is the assumption — contemporary worship as essential to success — invariably true? Some American churches are saying

no and are proving it with vibrant, creative traditional worship. No form of worship is inherently superior, they stress. The key to a healthy church is finding a mode of worship for which each congregation is uniquely equipped and carrying it off with excellence. Done well, traditional worship remains effective, they add.

'Not the end-all issue'

"Style is not the end-all issue," said Mark Wingfield, who tackled the issue earlier this year in his book, "Staying Alive: Why the Conventional Wisdom about Traditional Churches is Wrong." "The issue is, can you be competent and relevant where you are? And changing your worship style may or may not help that."

The terms "traditional" and "contemporary" are slippery, admits Wingfield, associate pastor at Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas. In his book, Wingfield defined traditional churches as those which adhere to the generally accepted liturgy of their denominational

identity. For Baptists, a simple indicator would be primarily singing hymns rather than praise choruses.

George Mason, pastor at Wilshire Baptist, draws this distinction: Contemporary churches identify the needs of the culture and craft a religious experience to address those needs, while traditional churches begin with historic creeds, hymns and liturgies, and invite people to join the ongoing stream of faith.

"Every church has a tradition," Mason said. "And every tradition can become stale and routine. The point is not to serve the tradition but for the tradition to serve the church."

Other observers — including author and musician Marva Dawn — think the choice is largely a false one.

"A lot of the tension between contemporary and traditional arises because we didn't have enough theological muscle to hold them together," she said in a recent video interview. "We need to realize that every service is contemporary because we're doing it now, and every service is traditional because we're based on the faith of our forebears. ... I believe that we can use the music of the whole church for the sake of the whole world."

But while definitions of contemporary or traditional worship may be elusive, most American churchgoers probably believe they know it when they see it. And at first glance, what they see seems to suggest success.

Every city and town has at least one contemporary church whose size and energy is attractive. In fact, the study by Faith Communities Today found a nearly 60 percent increase in attendance in churches that adopt a contemporary style of worship.

The problem, leaders of strong traditional churches insist, is that some congregations simply don't have the human resources necessary to conduct quality contemporary worship but often do have highly skilled members capable of creative traditional worship. More importantly, not all the needs of churches' surrounding communities can be met by contemporary worship.

"I think churches need to be real about the staff they have in place to do a contemporary service," said choral composer David Schwoebel, minister of music at Derbyshire Baptist Church, Richmond, Va. "Unless you

have the professionals leading it with the very best equipment, lights and sound, it will never appeal to the unbelievers, as they know what quality sounds like thanks to iPods and YouTube."

South Main Baptist Church, Houston, discovered that when a consultant told its leaders, "Unless you start a contemporary worship service, your church is going to die." Eager to grow, the church launched a second service only to discover it lacked a corps of members trained to lead contemporary worship. To compensate the congregation spent thousands of dollars to hire a worship band, but the service never attracted more than about 50 people, and eventually it was discontinued.

In the aftermath, South Main realized it had many members with classical music skills and came to the conclusion traditional worship was a natural fit for it and its community.

"The default standard in worship style in Baptist life is contemporary," said Steve Wells, South Main's pastor. "Because of our church's architecture and the size of Houston and our location, we can do it differently. The caliber and kind of music we have in worship is drawing people to our sanctuary."

Doing traditional worship well demands creativity, noted Phil Mitchell, minister of music at First, Richmond. While the organ at the 232-year-old church is the primary accompaniment for hymn singing, and the congregation recently purchased the new "Celebrate Grace" hymnal, worship there is characterized by varied music.

"One of the reasons we succeed is that we push the edges on both sides," Mitchell said. "I have the freedom to bring in many elements that bring vitality and freshness. We can do a variety of styles and not be locked into one."

A clear identity — knowing who they are — also is key to vibrant worshipping communities, said several leaders, and may be one reason contemporary worship fails in some places where traditional worship thrives.

"Churches succeed when they understand their unique histories, resources and contexts," consultant Will Mancini said.

Failure to grasp that can be fatal, but it's



Photo courtesy of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, has two traditional worship services as well as a contemporary service on Sunday mornings.



ABP photo

Guest organist Joanna Wallace plays during a worship service at College Park Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. The church blends the organ into an integrated worship style that ranges from praise and worship to orchestral.

Organ provides ‘thrilling sound’ with ‘soul’

There are times, Shaun King said, when worship music should be energetic, light or joyful. That’s when instruments like pianos, drums and guitars do the trick.

But then there are times when the sound needs to be “bigger and in your face,” said the senior pastor of College Park Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. And that’s when you need an organ.

“When there needs to be a bigness that envelops everyone in the room, the organ can do that,” he said. King’s church has had an organ all of its 85 years and today blends it into an integrated worship style that ranges from praise and worship to orchestral.

Experts who play, study and make organs say King’s attitude is becoming increasingly common in churches across the denominational spectrum.

The organ — whether in electric, digital or pipe form — is enjoying a comeback after suffering declines in the 1990s and early 2000s, despite price tags that range from the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars.

“There are a lot of naysayers who say the organ is dead, but that’s simply not true,” said Frederick Swann, an internationally acclaimed organ master who performed on Crystal Cathedral broadcasts for 16 years.

Swann said interest in the organ waned as modern worship forms surged in the late 1980s. As a result, university organ programs suffered from lack of interest and organists became generally harder to find.

“But they are now burgeoning with

students again,” Swann said of the college programs. And organ recitals held by churches are increasingly packed coast to coast, he said.

Swann attributes the turnaround to what he sees as spiritual yearning for inspirational music. “A lot of people feel the organ has a soul, either through its beautiful quietness or enormous volume,” he said. “It’s a very thrilling sound.”

Reaching visitors

More people apparently are feeling that way outside the church as well, said Brent Beasley, senior pastor at Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas. Beasley’s church hosts the largest pipe organ in Texas and the largest of its specific design in the world, said Swann, who consulted on its installation and played its inaugural recital in 1996.

“We’re seeing a generation who grew up with contemporary worship, and a lot of them are looking for something else,” Beasley said.

David Mikesell, 20, said he’s looking for a balance. He grew up worshipping at College Park Baptist and has come to love the organ in worship. But he also likes the energetic praise-and-worship style at the student services he attends at Florida State University.

That makes him grateful for the way his church integrates both styles, he said.

“There’s an attitude that the organ can be stuffy,” Mikesell said. “But I think Christian music has a long and rich history, and the organ is indispensable.” (ABP)

worship and the genuineness of people who offer as well as experience it. It’s our uniqueness as a worshipping body which hopefully makes the visitor wonder what it’s all about.”

“Some forms of worship today quickly become irrelevant in their attempted relevance,” Mason said. “Traditional worship is both intergenerational and transgenerational. It gives a voice to every generation, including those that have gone before.” (ABP)

No single worship style trumps another, state leaders say

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

It is an unchallenged assumption. Churches with a casually dressed preacher and guitar- and drum-driven worship songs are essential to a vibrant church, and if a church has traditional worship it will decline and die (see story, page 4). But is it true?

Alabama Baptist worship leaders hold their own views on the assumption that contemporary worship is vital to success in today’s churches.

Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said he disagrees with the assumption.

Successful worship is vibrant and passionate and happens throughout the week as personal worship, he said.

“It’s the heart of the worshipper,” he explained. “If the worshipper is worshipping in spirit and truth, it doesn’t matter what ... style it is.”

According to Hibbs, the SBOM’s office of worship leadership and church music does not hold a worship style preference and considers all styles of music valid. He shared that many Alabama Baptist churches use a blended style of worship, which blends traditional and contemporary songs, music and presentation.

Eric Mathis, instructor of church music and worship leadership at Samford University in Birmingham, said successful worship for a church is all about finding one’s niche.

The assumption that contemporary is the only option is “grossly mistaken,” he said. Too many people currently run the risk of saying the church has to go one single direction, he said. “I just don’t think that’s true.”

Mathis grew up in a small Missouri town, and his grandmother served as church organist for more than 40 years. He received his early musical training in the church — first learning to play by ear and then eventually learning to read music.

Originally thinking he would go into full-time music ministry, Mathis attended Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., to study piano performance. But he was frustrated by “worship wars” he was observing at the time, and a professor encouraged him to consider teaching. That set him on a path where he went on to receive a master of music in church music from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and later a master of divinity from George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in theology with emphases in Christian worship and preaching from Fuller Theological Seminary.

Mathis explained when worship is reduced to musical styles only, music is made subjective because it becomes more about one’s own personal preferences. “Worship is all about how God is God and we’re not,” he noted.

According to Mathis, people tend to think that because some churches are going the

way of guitar- and band-driven worship, all churches will move that direction.

While it is certainly true some churches are going that way, he explained, many other churches possessing a more traditional style of worship — both within and outside of Baptist life — also have worship that is vibrant.

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, is an example of a church with a successful traditional worship service, he said, noting more than 1,800 people attend its two traditional services on Sunday mornings.

But churches proudly waving a “tradition and heritage” flag must also be careful not to become stale, he noted. They must find ways to reinvigorate their worship to make it fresh to their particular context, he said.

Mathis serves as church organist at Dawson but also fills in to lead the contemporary worship service when needed.

“I love the hymns ... organs ... choirs ... just as much as I love the band,” he said.

“I love more than anything when a church can find its niche in worship.”

Jason Breland, worship pastor of First Baptist Church North Mobile, Saraland, said, “I think the church as a whole is much bigger than dress code or a certain instrumentation on the platform.”

Disagreeing with the assumption that contemporary is the only option, Breland — who serves on the faculty of the Center for Performing Arts (CPA)/School of Music and School of Worship Leadership at the University of Mobile and is the artist in residence — said the as-

sumption “is a very limiting perspective.”

Breland grew up at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, and attended Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. He toured with his father Roger Breland’s Christian music group, TRUTH, for six years and has served churches in various states including Ohio and Florida.

Breland knows of vibrant churches that would be labeled traditional as well as those that are casual and not traditional in any sense of the word.

Vibrant churches

For example, the choir at First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., sings in choir robes and Pastor Johnny Hunt preaches in a suit.

On the west coast, the praise team and contemporary band at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., is casually dressed, just like Pastor Rick Warren. But both churches are making a significant impact in their areas and around the world, Breland said.

“The health of the church and the effect of the church” have to be measured by more than what’s worn on the platform and what instruments are used in praise and worship, he said.

Mathis added, “I think the reality is that we need all the music that the church offers.” The importance is learning to love our neighbors in worship so much “that we’re willing to sing each other’s songs.” ☛

“If the worshipper is worshipping in spirit and truth, it doesn’t matter what ... style it is.”

**Keith Hibbs
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions**

Across Alabama's Associations

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **First Church, Luverne**, will celebrate its 123rd anniversary and homecoming Sept. 30, 10 a.m. with music, a sermon and a video tribute of former members. Lunch will follow. Donnie Burns is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Monte Erwin** is the new part-time worship pastor of **Concord Church, Bessemer**. He received a degree in music education from Oklahoma Baptist University and has served in various ministry positions, including 15 years with the International Mission Board and on staff with Student Life Bible Study. Matt McGukin is pastor.

CHILTON

► **Randal W. Mims** is the new pastor of **Concord Church, Clanton**. He holds an associate of divinity degree from Samford University in Birmingham. He previously served as pastor of Thomaston Church and also has served Pates Chapel Church, Jemison; First Church, Shelby; and Union Church, Rockford. He and his wife, Janice, have two children and three grandchildren. **Selena Short Price** is the new music director for Concord Church. She is married to Thad.

CONECUH

► **Sweet Home Church, McKenzie**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 7, 10:30 a.m. with The Gospel Melodies in concert. A covered-dish lunch will follow.

For information call 334-374-2560. Allen Joyner is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Steve Holland** is the new pastor of **New Hope Church, Glencoe**. He previously served as pastor of Ruhama Church, Aniston, and was minister of education and associate pastor of Mount Zion Church, Alexandria. He attended Jacksonville State University and holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in religious education from Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. He and his wife, Linda, have two children.

GENEVA

► **Bellwood Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 7. Morning session will begin at 10:30 and lunch will follow at 12:30 p.m. The afternoon session will be at 2 p.m. Wayne Scarborough, pastor of Auburn Heights Church, Phenix City, will speak. Former pastor Ralph Brannon and music director David Tinsley will provide special music during the morning session. Four Calvary from Florida will provide music during the afternoon. For information call 334-588-6766. Dicky McAllister is interim pastor.

JUDSON

► **Trinity Church, Headland**, will celebrate its 25th anniversary Oct. 7, 9:45 a.m. Former pastor Bill Ashford will speak and Hasten Walker will lead music. A covered-dish lunch will follow.

Dan Sheppard is pastor.

MORGAN

► **East Highland Church, Hartselle**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 7 with Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. and morning worship at 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. Walter M. Blackman is pastor. ► **Flint Church, Decatur**, will hold revival with Dan Moran Oct. 7-10, Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. For information call 256-353-7429. Richard L. Richie is pastor. ► **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will host Strait Way Quartet in concert Sept. 30, 5 p.m. Dewitt Crowe is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Concord Church, Calera**, will hold a Sunday night singing Sept. 30, 6 p.m. featuring the church's music ministry. Daryle Nichols is pastor. ► **Riverchase Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate its 25th anniversary Oct. 7 with fellowship and combined adult Sunday School at 9 a.m., worship service at 10:30 a.m. and catered barbecue lunch at 11:30 a.m. For lunch reservations call Becky at 205-985-4495 or email becky@rbccstaff.com. Jeffrey A. Greer is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Purpose Church, Opelika**, will host Brother Billy Bob Bohannon Sept. 30, 6 p.m. Fellowship will follow. Tom Grantham is pastor.



Roy J. Fish

Longtime seminary evangelism professor dies

Roy J. Fish, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) distinguished professor emeritus of evangelism, died Sept. 10 at age 82.

As Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson put it, "Dr. Roy Fish was at once a fabulous lecturer and the most consistent soul winner I know. He lit a fire under thousands of students."

Fish organized for many years the annual Spring Break Revival Practicum, now called Revive This Nation, as the seminary sent out hundreds of student preachers across the United States to preach revivals in local churches.

Fish held second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and interim president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

Fish served as pastor or interim pastor at more than 20 churches, including several years at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. He also spoke and preached at conventions, conferences and churches on every continent except Antarctica and authored several books and numerous articles and essays on evangelism.

Fish received various awards, including the W.A. Criswell Lifetime Award in Evangelism from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC), the Charles G. Finney Award for Evangelism in Theological Education and an honorary doctorate from Southwest Baptist University. The SBTC established the Roy Fish Evangelism Award in 2006.

Southwestern reorganized its division of evangelism and missions in the School of Theology in 2005 and named it the Roy Fish School of Evangelism and Missions. The seminary later designated Oct. 10, 2007, as "Roy Fish Day," honoring Fish during a special chapel service and reception.

Fish held a bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas and both the bachelor of divinity (equivalent to the current M.Div.) and the doctor of theology from SWBTS.

Fish is survived by his wife, Jean Holley Fish; four children; and 15 grandchildren. (BP)

Wayne W. Upton

Retired pastor, director of missions dies

Wayne W. Upton, retired pastor, missionary and professor, died Aug. 14. He was 82.

Upton was born in Centre and graduated from Centre High School in 1948.

He served in the Navy during the Korean War, where he received his call to ministry.

Upton received a bachelor of science degree in horticulture from Auburn University in 1956, a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1959 and a doctor of ministry degree from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga., in the early 1970s, where he later served on the faculty.

Upton was the first person to ask for and take a correspondence course from the Southern Baptist Convention Seminary Extension, beginning in 1951 when he was serving in the Navy.

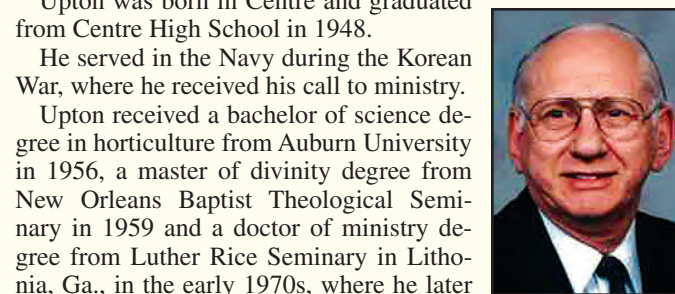
Upton's service as pastor included First Baptist Church, Atmore; Martinville Baptist Church, Atmore; and Calvary Baptist Church, Eufaula, as well as churches in Ohio and Florida.

He also served as director of missions for Tennessee River Baptist Association and as pastor of Poarch Indian Mission, Atmore, under the leadership of First, Atmore.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Barbara, and two children. (TAB)



FISH



UPTON



By Christine Kapurch
Correspondent, TAB

Someone You Should Know

TERESA GORE

Keener Baptist Church, Attalla
Etowah Baptist Association



GORE

FAVORITE VERSE: James 1:1-4

FAVORITE HYMN: "Victory in Jesus"

HOBBIES: Photography and spending time with family

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Keener Baptist Pastor Kenneth Gore; one child, Mason

Teresa Gore has been the youth leader at Keener Baptist Church for two years. She has raised youth membership from five to 25 during her time there.

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

A: I became a Christian when I was 12 but I never developed a true relationship until I was 27. It is a daily open relationship learning about Him. When we are young we say the prayer but we never follow up.

Q: When and how were you led into your ministry work?

A: In 1997 I began a true relationship with Jesus. [My husband and I] were really active with the young couples in our church ... When my husband got out of seminary I assisted him and did youth work. When I came to Keener they didn't have a youth leader. Now two years later they are my joy. It's where God wants me right now.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: To me it's nothing more than time. I think we become complacent when there's so much work to

be done. You don't do it out of obligation; it's your life. I wouldn't know how else to do life.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: We all support each other. Everything we do with the youth, we do together. They support me just by being themselves.

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

A: Always working in the church regardless of whether my husband is pastor or not. I'll hopefully be serving somehow.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Rudy Gray named S.C. Baptist Courier editor

GREENVILLE, S.C. — James Rudy Gray, a pastor, writer and Christian counselor with roots in journalism, has been named the 11th editor and president of the *Baptist Courier*, the official newspaper of the South Carolina Baptists Convention (SCBC).

Gray, 59, was elected unanimously by members of the *Courier's* board of trustees at their fall meeting in Greenville, S.C., on Sept. 7.



GRAY

He will succeed Don Kirkland, 68, who announced in March that he will retire at the end of 2012, capping a 38-year career with South Carolina Baptists' denominational newspaper. Kirkland has served as editor and president since March 1996.

In addition to holding a degree from Anderson University, Gray is a graduate of Southern Wesleyan University and Luther Rice Seminary, where he earned master of theology and doctor of ministry degrees. He is also a graduate of Liberty University with a master of arts in counseling.

He previously served as pastor of Roebuck Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Central; and Unity Baptist Church, Starr — all in South Carolina.

He was elected president of the SCBC in 2009 and is a past board member and chairman for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He served two terms on the *Courier's* board of trustees in the 1990s and was back on the board in a current role when elected as editor.

CP giving poised to hit this year's SBC budget

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are \$174,983,253.81, or 2.63 percent above the year-to-date budgeted goal, and 0.29 percent ahead of contributions received during the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank S. Page. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2011-12 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget.

As of Aug. 31, the \$174,983,253.81 in gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled 102.63 percent of the \$170,500,000 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$507,698.92 more than the \$174,475,554.89 received through the end of August 2011.

Designated giving of \$186,370,303.66 for the same year-to-date period is 0.03 percent, or \$52,302.77, above gifts received at this point last year. This total includes only those gifts received and distributed by the Executive Committee and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

August's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$14,244,461.96. Designated gifts received last month amounted to \$4,929,230.39.

NAMB's Larry Wynn joining Georgia Baptists

ALPHARETTA — Larry Wynn, who has served as vice president of evangelism at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) since early 2011, announced Sept. 11 he is leaving NAMB to become vice president of revitalization for the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC).

Wynn has spent all of his ministry years in Georgia, having served as pastor of Hebron Baptist Church, Dacula, for 32 years before taking the position at NAMB. During that time Wynn served in a number of leadership roles in Georgia Baptist life and in the broader Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). He is a past first vice president of the SBC and has twice served as president of the GBC. He chaired a task force that studied the GBC's structural alignment and helped fashion its new "Five Smooth Stones" realignment, which focuses on spiritual awakening, evangelism, church planting, stewardship and church revitalization.

Wynn said he leaves NAMB in support of the direction in which Kevin Ezell is leading. He will begin his new role with the GBC on Oct. 1.



WYNN

U.S. News names Samford, UMobile among best colleges nationwide

How are Alabama Baptist universities stacking up against other academic institutions around the U.S.? Based on the latest *U.S. News & World Report* Best Colleges rankings released Sept. 12, both Samford University in Birmingham and the University of Mobile (UMobile) received high rankings in their respective categories.

Samford University was ranked fourth in the "Regional Universities-South" category for the second consecutive year, continuing a three-decade tradition of being ranked in the top tier of its peer group.

Samford was the highest ranked university in Alabama in any peer group and ranked very high among Southern Conference peers. Among Southern Conference schools only Elon University in North Carolina was higher, ranked second in the same category as Samford. Samford also was among the highest-ranking historically Baptist colleges and universities.

"Rankings are just one measure of an institution's success," said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland. "We always are interested in assessing our standing compared with our peers, but at Samford we believe that our best assessment is in the academic success of our faculty, students and alumni."

Specific criteria

The rankings are based on the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classifications and assess such criteria as academic reputation, graduation and retention rates, class size, faculty/student ratios and alumni giving, according to R. Phil Kimrey, Samford's vice president for student affairs and enrollment management. Peer assessments from presidents, provosts and chief admission officers of institutions in the same

classification also are used to determine the rankings.

Institutions in Samford's classification are ranked in four regions. Samford's overall score placed it 12th nationally among the 625 institutions classified as regional universities. This is the largest classification grouping in the *U.S. News* rankings.

Samford also was included on two of the special category lists that are part of the 2013 rankings.

The school was ranked 11th among regional universities in the South in the "Best Value Schools" category. According to *U.S. News* officials, only schools ranked in or near the top half of their categories are included in this list because they are considered the significant values.

In addition, Samford was named an "A+ School for B Students" among regional universities in the South. Institutions on this list admitted a "meaningful proportion of applicants whose test scores and class standing put them in non-A territory, but who have a decent shot at being accepted and thriving," according to *U.S. News*.

"The rankings and assessments from our peers confirm what we at Samford University have known for years — that Samford's emphasis on rigorous academics is succeeding," Westmoreland added. "Many people have helped to build that strong reputation through the years."

UMobile was ranked 28th in the

"Regional Colleges-South" category. In addition, the school was listed as an "A+ School for B Students" in the "Regional Colleges-South" category.

"We appreciate the recognition that the University of Mobile received in this survey," said Kathy Dean, director of media relations for UMobile.

"Our focus on quality academic programs and integrating learning, faith and leadership continue to attract attention beyond our region," she added. "Surveys such as this are among many sources of information that prospective college students and their families can use to help find a school that is the right fit for them."

Other Alabama schools ranking in the top 50 in the "Regional Colleges-South" category were Tuskegee University (13th); Huntingdon College in Montgomery (22nd); Faulkner University in Montgomery (42nd); and Oakwood University in Huntsville (49th).

In the "Regional Universities-South" category, Spring Hill College in Mobile (17th) and the University of Montevallo (37th) were ranked in the top 50.

In the "National Universities" category, the University of Alabama was ranked 77th and Auburn University 89th.

Judson College in Marion was listed in the "National Liberal Arts Colleges" category and its ranking was not published. (Samford, TAB)

"At Samford we believe that our best assessment is in the academic success of our faculty, students and alumni."

**President Andrew Westmoreland
Samford University**



Photo courtesy of Taylor Baptist Church

DOTHAN'S TAYLOR BAPTIST CHURCH BURNS NOTE

Taylor Baptist Church, Dothan, in Columbia Baptist Association holds a note-burning service July 1. The church borrowed money to remodel the sanctuary in 2008.

Called to faithfulness

UNA student part of 'incredible work' in Philippines

Ministers of the gospel know that they are not called to success, but to faithfulness. As Paul asserts in 1 Corinthians 3, we may plant or water the seeds of the gospel, but it is God who gives growth.

This summer a region of the Oras River in the Philippines, spiritually a long-seeded, long-watered desert, bloomed with unexpected growth.

Jacob Dennison, a senior environmental biology major at the University of North Alabama in Florence who attends First Baptist Church, Florence, was part of an International Mission Board Nehemiah Team that spent the summer staying in Filipino villages along the Oras.

"I've always felt that God wanted me to do something like this for Him, so I forgot about work and about money for this last summer and went," he said.

The five team members, two translators and Southern Baptist representative in the Philippines spent a week each in five villages that are only accessible by river. They bought a week's worth of supplies before each trip so as not to be a burden on the villages.

Once the group reached a village they would do a gospel presentation at a central location in the village and then offer to conduct Bible studies through the week with anyone who was interested. They might meet with a person only once or every day the team was in the village, Dennison said.

"We had two translators, so we could do two Bible studies at any given time with people."

Suzie Miller, who serves with her husband Carl as Southern Baptist representatives in the region, said over the course of the summer Dennison's group shared the gospel with 400 people. But while the villages along the Oras had barely seen spiritual fruit before, this time was different.

Two hundred and twenty-one people among the five villages prayed to receive Christ this summer.

"I was doubtful originally (about the Filipinos' sincerity)," Dennison said. But if only some of the



Photo courtesy of Jacob Dennison

Jacob Dennison, a senior at the University of North Alabama in Florence, ministers to children in Filipino villages along the Oras.

people were sincere, "that's an incredible work."

Eighty people agreed to be baptized, Suzie Miller said, which is "a major step in this culture as it indicates a definite break from the established cultural religion."

Many villagers who accepted Christ were so hungry to learn more about the Bible that they kept holding daily Bible studies after the team left or even traveled to the next village when the team did. One 19-year-old Filipino even volunteered time to serve as an extra translator in the fourth and fifth villages where the team ministered.

Currently, two Southern Baptist volunteers are following up with the new converts along the Oras, discipling them and encouraging them to share their newfound faith with others.

"We are desperately praying for two more journey-men to serve for two years to continue the follow-up," Suzie Miller said. (Joseph Rhea)

ERLC urges high court to review gay 'marriage' case

The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and other religious groups have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review a federal appeals court's ruling that a state cannot define marriage as between a man and a woman.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed Aug. 31, ERLC joined three other religious entities in urging the high court to rule on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' invalidation of Proposition 8, a 2008 amendment approved by California voters that defined marriage as between a man and a woman.

The National Association of Evangelicals filed the brief. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints also signed.

The brief marks another development in the national debate over same-sex "marriage," an issue that now awaits Supreme Court consideration in two cases and a possible watershed decision.

The Prop 8 case, which was appealed to the high court by its proponents in July, could decide the constitutionality of laws in 44 states that do not recognize gay "marriage." Thirty states have constitutional amendments and 14 states have laws that define marriage in the traditional sense.

Another case appealed to the justices in June could determine if the federal government may define marriage as only between a man and a woman, as it did in the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). (BP)



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'Get the word out'

Texas businessman's evangelism tract reaches thousands of prisoners for Christ

A new gospel tract published by Houston businessman David Howell has been read by at least 15,000 people — most of them prisoners — since June, and many have reported that God used it to change their lives.

Titled "How to be a Child of God," the comic-book style booklet explains the concept of being crucified with Christ, presented by the apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20. An accompanying video presents its message online with automation and professional voiceover.

"You don't see any words like 'redemption' and 'salvation.' There's just plain talk about how to become a child of God," Howell told the *TEXAN*. "I try to keep it as simple as possible for those who haven't been around church and have never heard those terms."

Howell, a member of Second Baptist Church, Houston, began writing the tract more than five years ago after he became frustrated that other tracts leave out important points of the gospel and basic Christian living. Often he found himself asking to meet with new believers who came to Christ through a different tract in order to explain more.

After Howell wrote the text he asked a team, including staff members at Second Baptist, to review it.

Then he contracted artist Randy Rogers to produce draw-



Graphic courtesy of David Howell

WALKING WITH JESUS — The front cover of the gospel tract published by businessman David Howell — titled 'How to be a child of God' — depicts Jesus and a man walking toward heaven.

ings that illustrated the message. Eventually Howell produced the video as well.

He planned to print a limited supply of the tracts and felt God leading him to send them to prisons and rehabilitation centers. But when he consulted a friend familiar with prison ministry, Howell realized God was opening a door for much wider distribution.

"He said, 'It's dynamite, man. It's colorful. It's exactly what [prison ministries] want — easy to understand. You've got Bible verses already in it. They don't have to have a Bible ... It's perfect,'" Howell recalled.

His friend gave him the name

of each prison chaplain in the state and told him to send 100 copies to each. With 114 prisons, that translated into 11,400 copies. So Howell printed 15,000 on the first run in June. When those ran out, he printed another 10,000 and has given out most of those as well.

Used by God

Prison chaplains "have been calling and wanting more," Howell said. "So I've been taking them back. I gave 3,000 to the Harris County jail and they wanted 11,000."

Howell regularly receives letters from prisoners and prison

chaplains telling him how God used the tract.

It also proved popular at rehab centers. While visiting a 12-step recovery group recently, a man to whom he had given a copy a month earlier told Howell the tract was "exactly what I needed."

The man went on to say, "I was looking for a spiritual connection of some sort ... I had grown up in the church, and I had a wife that used to take me and beat me over the head with the Bible — I just never got it. And I got real resentful toward her and I just shunned the entire thing. But in that book that you gave me I saw how simple it was."

The video is designed to reach Internet users ages 25–40. One pastor liked it so much that he embedded it on his church's website. Howell encourages others to do the same.

Young adults "get their information from the Internet," he said. "So I said, 'I've got to get on the Internet. The only way to do that is with a video.' That brought me into doing the video based on the book."

In addition to introducing people to Jesus for the first time, Howell hopes his tract and video will help them persevere in their commitment by explaining that a believer's old self must die with Christ and he must become a new person who walks with Christ.

"If people could understand that early in their salvation experience, then they might get it and they might stay with it," he said. "And they might later not

have such a need for reassurance or counseling and lots of other things we do as Christians."

Because it has all Scriptures written out in full, the booklet can be used as a 30-day devotional and meditation guide.

Personal testimony

Howell's passion for the idea of being crucified with Christ reflects his own testimony. After being saved in Alaska at age 41, he began reverting back to old ways of thinking.

Then God impressed on him the reality expressed in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

In response, Howell repented of his sins and began to grow in his faith. Reflecting back years later, he wants to make sure other new believers have a chance to learn the importance of dying to self and "co-crucifixion" with Christ.

"I'm just trying to get the word out," Howell said. "I'm not a for-profit kind of guy, and I'm not trying to make a living out of this. God's blessed me in other ways. I'm just wanting to get the message out."

To view the tract or to watch the video, visit howtobeachildofgod.com.

Printed copies of the tract are available with discounts for those wishing to buy in bulk. DVDs of the video may be purchased online as well. (BP)



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Letters to the Editor

CHRISTMAS CARDS

It is time to ask you to help with the MAC D Ministries Christmas Card Project for the inmates at Limestone Correctional Facility. Get or make Christmas cards, sign them and place them in an envelope without an address or return address.

Put several in a larger envelope or a box and send them to me. They need to be in Tuscaloosa by Dec. 3.

The address is MAC D Ministries, 4030 6th St. East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404. The undressed cards will be delivered to the proper people. Be sure the cards will let those receiving them know they are wished a blessed Christmas. Cover the cards with prayer. If you have questions email adunnam4030@comcast.net or call 205-553-1592. In the past we have had an outpour-

ing of wonderful cards for this.

Please do your best to help this year! Remember, do not put your address on or in the cards. This is the request of the facility. I do want your address on the package you send me. Thank you in advance.

Scarlett Dunnam
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

GOSPEL PROJECT

I read with great interest the Associated Baptist Press article, "Is LifeWay curriculum biased to Calvinists?" in the Aug. 30 issue. I found Dr. Emir Caner's critiques of The Gospel Project to be very interesting because my Bible study class was part of the pilot project that reviewed the first four lessons before the full quarterly was released.

The article says he previewed early sample lessons, but I don't know that he was reading the

same material I was using. I did not see in the material anything regarding predestination or a diminishing of human responsibility. Are some of the people cited Calvinists? Yes. Some are also Arminian. And some are from the period of the Great Church, such as Augustine of Hippo and John of Damascus.

In addition, his accusation of "ecumenism" (and by implication, "liberalism") is simply unfounded. Does the material quote different people throughout church history to make a specific point? Yes. Were some of them not Baptists? Yes. Is that ecumenism? No.

Ecumenism is the effort to

reduce all Protestant Christian denominations to one denomination by means of a very broad and very shallow doctrinal basis. It essentially says, "Let's ignore our differences and come together for the sake of unity." There was no ecumenism or liberalism in the material that I saw.

Personally I don't think The Gospel Project is anymore Calvinistic than the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, a document worded broadly enough that those who tend toward some elements of Arminianism and some elements of Calvinism (and some points in between) can come together around it.

A.J. Smith
Alabaster Ala.

Spring Valley to present 'Persecution'

What would you do if following Jesus Christ cost you everything — even your very life?

That is what propels "The Persecution," a live performance drama Spring Valley Baptist Church, Springville, will present Oct. 20, 21, 27 and 28 at 6 and 7:30 p.m.

Spring Valley Baptist Pastor Barry Britt wrote the "intense drama" to challenge people to a deeper commitment to Christ. It portrays a man choosing to follow Christ in the

face of tribulation, Britt explained.

The church's previous drama, "The Tale of Two Thieves," saw hundreds of people make decisions to receive Christ as their Savior or renew their commitment to the Lord, Britt said. The St. Clair Baptist Association church hopes "The Persecution" will have the same impact.

For more information, visit www.SpringValleyBaptistChurch.org or call 205-467-2285. (TAB)

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— Bro. Justin Salter
Smithville Baptist Church

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Eastern Valley Baptist Church, Bessemer, Ala., is seeking God's will for a senior pastor. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, 1216 Potter Avenue, Bessemer, AL 35020, or email to: evbc2009@gmail.com. Call 205-428-8211 for more information. Office hours are 8 a.m.-noon, Monday-Friday.

SENIOR PASTOR: Raleigh White Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., is currently accepting resumes for a full-time pastor. Candidates should have experience in a pastoral position and seminary degree. Resumes are being accepted through Nov. 15 and may be emailed to: raleighwhitebaptist@gmail.com, or mailed to: Raleigh White Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search, 2804 Phillips Drive, Albany, GA 31721.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Bethel Baptist Church, Brent, Ala., is seeking a bivocational pastor to begin Jan. 1, 2013. Send resumes to: Danny Russell, 298 Tabernacle Road, Brent, AL 35034.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Church seeking bivocational pastor. Please send resume to: New Beginning Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1376, Alexander City, AL 35011.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Ken Bush
Central Park Baptist Church, Decatur

Miss" Katie is in her 80s and has been a church member since childhood. One day she came by my office and we began to talk. She told me that long ago she responded to the invitation during a revival and was baptized. She has been bothered often since then, not having any sense of certainty about her salvation.

A few weeks prior to our conversation she attended a revival where evangelist Phil Waldrep was preaching. He spoke of how many church members have never truly accepted God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. They might have "walked the aisle" as an emotional response to the invitation or for some other invalid reason. As a result they probably think they are a Christian but may be deceived by a misunderstanding of what repentance and accepting Christ is really about: a commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus. This is what Katie discovered about herself.

When Katie shared these doubts and concerns with me, I must admit that you could have knocked me over with a feather. She is such a sweet woman and probably as good a person as any. But as we know from reading God's Word, being good is not a qualification for eternal life, for only one man was ever "good enough." That was Jesus! After talking and weeping together, Katie and I prayed. She confessed to the Lord that she had never asked His forgiveness for her sins and that she wanted Jesus to be her Savior and Lord. Afterwards she and I wept again as she realized a tremendous relief from the burden she had carried for so long. A few days later, the waterworks returned as I shared Katie's experience before baptizing her.

Do you know with a certainty that when you die you will spend eternity with Jesus in heaven? There is no need to be uncertain. First John 5:13 says: "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." God doesn't want you to simply hope that you are saved. He wants you to experience the joy and freedom that comes from knowing that you know that you know.

'Liquidity challenges' loom for Florida Baptist Convention

Florida Baptists are assessing their future budgeting after being warned by auditors that their convention could face liquidity challenges as it moves toward a 50/50 split of Cooperative Program (CP) receipts.

"Without increased revenue or decreased expenditures, in the very near future, you will face liquidity challenges," auditor Mike Lee told the Florida State Board of Missions in May.

Auditors said the Florida Baptist Convention either must increase receipts by \$2 million each year or decrease expenditures by \$2 million to remain solvent, according to an article by the convention's communications division published in the *Florida Baptist Witness*.

Last fall, messengers to the annual meeting of the Florida Baptist State Convention approved a seven-year CP budget plan that would forward 50 percent of CP

receipts from Florida churches to national and international missions and ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention by 2018.

Amended plan

Messengers amended the proposed budget plan to eliminate the shared expenses designation from the split and incorporate shared ministry funding into the state convention portion of the budget.

A second part of the amendment clarified that the 50/50 split was not contingent on increased CP giving by the churches. Florida currently forwards 40.5 percent of its CP receipts.

In two columns published by the *Witness*, Florida Baptist leaders have voiced divergent views for what to do in light of the liquidity warning.

Danny de Armas, who served as chairman of the Imagine If Great Commission Resurgence

Task Force in Florida that made the 50/50 recommendation, wrote in favor of proceeding with the mandate.

"Most of the lost people in the world don't live where we live," de Armas wrote.

"Your Task Force concluded that less property, streamlined programming and fewer employees would not mean we are ineffective or even less effective." Addressing liquidity and achieving a 50/50 split are not incompatible objectives, he wrote.

Darin Kress, a member of the Florida State Board of Missions serving on the budget-allocations committee, wrote, "Florida Bapt-

tists should not apologize for making sure we have the necessary funding to expand our base of ministry here at home."

The ministry base, he said, provides funding for the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, The Baptist College of Florida, church plants, evangelistic events, training and missions partnerships — all of which have international implications.

Fewer Christians

"The North American Mission Board (NAMB) estimated that only 4 percent of the people of south Florida are Christians," Kress wrote.

"As a percentage, there are fewer Christians in south Florida than communist China (5.0) and south Florida has the same percentage of believers as the especially repressive communist country of North Korea."

Since 2005 the Florida convention has cut \$10 million from its budget, downsizing staff by more than 50 employees, according to John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention.

In 2014, as NAMB shifts its funding strategy, Florida agencies and institutions will have to "share the pain" of additional budget cuts, he said. (BP)

Jailed Iranian pastor freed after nearly 3 years

Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani has been acquitted of apostasy and released, ending a saga that drew international attention and saw him spend more than 1,000 days in jail in the face of a death sentence — simply for being a Christian.

Wyoming-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) reported Sept. 8 that Nadarkhani, in jail since 2009, was acquitted of apostasy — that is, converting from Islam to Christianity — but found guilty of evangelizing

Muslims. CSW said Nadarkhani was sentenced to three years in prison for the latter charge but released due to time already served. Nadarkhani said he never had been a Muslim.

Picture of a freed man

A picture of a freed Nadarkhani greeting his family soon made its way across the Internet and was tweeted by Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which has

championed Nadarkhani's case.

The White House, the U.S. State Department and governments around the world had spoken up for Nadarkhani.

Nadarkhani was arrested in October 2009 while registering his church in Rasht, Iran, although he initially was arrested for protesting his children being taught Islam in school, ACLJ reported. He was charged with apostasy for supposedly abandoning Islam and later was given a death sentence. (BP)

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Lance undergoes colon surgery

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance was scheduled to undergo surgery Sept. 17 at a Montgomery-area hospital. Lance said the surgery was to repair a colon tear caused by diverticulitis. Doctors anticipated a five-day hospital stay for the Alabama Baptist leader followed by recuperation at home.

Officials said Lance will be out of the office for several days though he hopes to work from home within a couple of weeks. Prayers will be appreciated, officials said.

Lance was scheduled to participate in a missions trip to Ukraine in early September but on the day he was to leave he was taken to the hospital where the colon tear was eventually discovered. (TAB)

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Clean water vital to reaching physical, spiritual needs

(continued from page 1)

About 200 people live here in the shadow of a small mountain, eking out their survival as subsistence farmers. Mud, brick and straw are used to build homes. Hundreds of dung patties, fuel for cooking, dry in the sun on the homes' walls.

Chickens, children and a few stray dogs wander the single dirt road that runs the length of the village. A mother sits in the dirt picking lice from her daughter's hair. Other women ferry containers of water balanced on their heads. The village has no running water.

With the help of two local church planters, Rajesh and Deepak, the OneLife team talks with 35-year-old Ram Palimanjhi, who lives in the village. "Water is our life," Palimanjhi says simply. He points to the pump, explaining that it hasn't worked for some time. But Palimanjhi's village has been fortunate, Rajesh says. They have a second well only a few minutes' walk away.

Bihar's hot, dry summers complicate the problem. Ground water levels will drop, often drying up shallower wells like the one near Palimanjhi's village, leaving even fewer sources of clean water. It's a serious problem across the area, Rajesh says, explaining that more than 100 families may depend on a single well. As summer progresses, crowds will begin forming around the ever-dwindling number of functional wells, forcing many to wait, sometimes an hour or more in 110-degree weather, just for a few gallons of water.

The long waits are time villagers could spend working their farms, caring for children or possibly attending school, Rajesh points out. Instead time is wasted gathering a commodity much of the world takes for granted.

"There's no comparison to what they have to do for water and what we have to do for water," Blanton says. "When I wake up in the morning to brush my teeth, I get out of my comfy bed



BP photo

Aaron Blanton (left) discusses a broken hand pump at a village well site in India's Bihar State. "This is more than clean water," says the former SONICFLOOD drummer and current OneLife water project advocate.

and I walk a few steps to my sink."

Once this well is dry, Palimanjhi and other village families will be forced to walk almost two miles to the nearest deep well. Or worse, they'll drink from nearby water sources like an uncovered well, stream or pond, risking diarrhea, parasites and other water-borne illnesses.

Inexpensive repairs

But this is just a single well, and the problem is often more serious than a broken handle. Fortunately bigger repairs are still relatively inexpensive, by Western standards. According to Rajesh, \$40 will replace an entire pump head; \$280 fixes a broken cylinder (part of a pump's internal mechanism), and \$550 pays for digging and outfitting a brand-new well, pump included.

Rajesh and Deepak have big goals in the One Cup of Water project. The men don't want just to fix broken wells, but to dig new ones too.

"If we can put four or five hand pumps in a village, that would be a sufficient source of clean water. That's about 4,000 to 5,000 hand pumps we will repair or install. It

is a great task," Rajesh says.

That's why he and Deepak say they are grateful for Blanton's partnership and the potential support he'll help rally. Working with national churches, they're envisioning dozens of OneLife student teams descending upon Bihar over the course of the next three years, finding, assessing and GPS-tagging hundreds of broken pumps. Bihari believers will come behind them to repair or replace the pumps and, in the process, form relationships that will lay the groundwork for sharing the gospel. Rajesh and Deepak are already seeing results from a small handful of pumps they've managed to repair themselves.

"Last summer this pump was working, and it was an amazing thing. All the other hand pumps were dry, but this hand pump was not. ... And people were saying this was because of God," Rajesh explains.

Rajesh believes giving people

clean water is the perfect entrée for sharing Living Water. "We are sharing the gospel directly and people are believing. But when we do this kind of work (repairing water pumps) for the Lord, it glorifies God because we are not only saying, but doing."

Blanton couldn't agree more. "We see Jesus do that all the time in the Bible, meeting people's physical needs," he says.

"That's why I think this project is so awesome. ... When we leave, not only have we shared the gospel of Jesus Christ, but we've also left them with a working pump. And both of those things are life-giving."

Blanton admits he can barely fix a toilet, let alone a water pump in India. But he says that's no excuse to not get involved.

"For us in America, I don't know that there is a ton of risk to dig in your pocket and pull out a few bucks that you probably wouldn't miss and put it down so that people can have water and

the gospel. The risk, I think, is not doing that. The risk is saying, ah, someone else will do it; someone else will take care of it."

The real requirement, he adds, is a compassionate heart and desire to make a difference in someone's life. Blanton says God awakened his own passion for India about five years ago during his first trip to the slums in Mumbai.

"God began to chip away some of the stone around my heart that I didn't even know was there in terms of caring for others," he says.

"I used to think that music was what I was all about, and how I would leave some kind of mark that I was here on the earth. But I'm seeing now that it's really a lot less about my name, my career, my songs," he says.

Be a part of OneLife's "One Cup of Water" project by giving, going or spreading the word. Visit www.onelifematters.org or email go@onelifematters.org. (BP)

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Hobby Lobby files suit against abortion mandate

Evangelical-owned Hobby Lobby has filed a lawsuit against the Obama administration's contraceptive/abortion mandate. With 500 stores in 41 states, Hobby Lobby has become the largest business yet to take action against the rule and underscoring once again that the issue impacts more than just Catholics.

The mandate requires businesses to purchase insurance plans that cover contraceptives, including "emergency" contraceptives that can cause chemical abortions. The latter drugs

often are labeled morning-after pills and come under brand names such as Plan B and ella.

Hobby Lobby is represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which filed the suit Sept. 12. There now are 28 separate suits against the mandate, according to Becket. Although Hobby Lobby's insurance plans cover contraceptives that are preventative in nature, the company will not cover anything that causes a chemical abortion, said David Green, Hobby Lobby's founder and CEO.

"These abortion-causing drugs go against our faith, and our family

is now being forced to choose between following the laws of the land that we love or maintaining the religious beliefs that have made our business successful," Green said during a conference call with reporters. "We simply cannot abandon our religious beliefs to comply with this mandate."

The suit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma, asserts the mandate violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of freedom of religion, speech and association. (BP)

Memphis church helps with area gun buy-back

Officials in Memphis, Tenn., traded gasoline for guns Sept. 15 at an inner-city Baptist church with no questions asked in a program aimed at reducing the number of weapons on the street.

The mayor's office teamed with Bloomfield Full Gospel Baptist Church and other organizations to sponsor "Gas for Guns" from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Each participant received a \$50 gas card in exchange for each gun up to a maximum of \$150 for three weapons per person.

Those surrendering guns also received two free tickets to a preseason game of the Memphis Grizzlies, the city's NBA professional basketball team.

"Crime, especially violent crime, is often fueled by relatively easy access to firearms," Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton said in a press release.

On the street

"Last year, 1,600 guns were reported stolen here in Memphis. Those guns didn't just evaporate and disappear. They ended up on the street," Wharton said.

Memphis Police Director Toney Armstrong said the parking lot of Bloomfield Baptist would be a "judgment-free zone," where no questions would be asked about any firearm turned in or any persons who participated.

"In 67 percent of the aggravated assaults we've investigated this year, a firearm has been used to commit those crimes," said Armstrong, a 23-year police force veteran appointed as director in April 2011.

"This is an effort for us to take guns off the street."

Forbes Magazine ranked

Memphis the second most-dangerous city in America behind Detroit.

The FBI reported a violent-crime rate of 1,006 per 100,000 inhabitants in a Memphis metropolitan area totaling 1.3 million in 2010.

Officials say chronic poverty plays a role.

More than 19 percent of residents were below the poverty line in 2010, making Memphis the most impoverished large metro area in the country.

Gun buy-back programs are growing in popularity in high-crime areas as an option to keep weapons out of the hands of criminals, but they are not without critics.

Recently in Detroit, gun advocates protested a police gun buy-back at a Catholic church by standing across the street with signs offering to pay more for firearms than was being offered by the police.

Protestors told local media that gun buy-back programs unfairly "demonize" guns, and that weapons do not cause crime. (ABP)



ABP graphic

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Sound Bites By Rick Sharp

ANDREW PETERSON

Light for the Lost Boy

Centricity

"Light for the Lost Boy," Andrew Peterson's latest music project, is hard to pigeonhole. That should come as no surprise to those familiar with his body of work, both as a songwriter/performer and as a prolific writer.

To say that the new record touches heavily on those things of God that frighten and confuse us ignores the hope and comfort embedded in most songs. This is truly not the feel-good praise music we love



so much these days; rather, it's a complicated, apparently deeply personal search for truth and understanding, with the complicated lyrical themes mirrored in the musical arrangements. Peterson's emotive voice is perfect for this; the end result a most satisfying if slightly disturbing collection of musical stories.

Musically, "Light for the Lost Boy" will delight. Colors, textures and intriguing rhythms abound, similar to Peterson's earlier work but stronger, more up-front. Longtime fans will find this new record familiar, and new listeners will find a huge palette to consider.

There's a lot to like in all of Peterson's work, and this new project is no exception. Maybe not an easy listen but satisfying.

UNSPOKEN

Get to Me

Centricity

"Get to Me," the first EP by new artists Unspoken on Centricity Music, had quite a debut on iTunes, where it reached #5 on the Christian & Gospel chart the second day after release. A quick listen will explain why. Good songwriting, clean production and excellent musicianship combine to make an excellent first effort. We'll certainly hear more from these guys.

The band had its beginning in the Dominican Republic, where



lead singer Chad Mattson had retreated on a missions trip to build churches, battle addiction and rebuild his relationship with God. While there he met guitarist Mike Gomez, and the two began to write and perform. Within two years they added bassist Jon Lowry and drummer Ariel Munoz and began playing anywhere they could. That was seven years ago. Since then they've shared the stage with such high-profile artists as Third Day, Casting Crowns and TobyMac. The Latin influ-

ence of Gomez and Munoz may be what adds the soulful, pop-rock flavor that's bright, uplifting and fun.

The record's first radio single, "Who You Are," reflects Mattson's recovery and the idea that our past does not dictate our future.

The band ministers with Celebrate Recovery, a 12-step program based on Christian principles founded by Saddleback Church.

I'm looking forward to their next release.

Book Reviews By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Distinctly Baptist: Proclaiming Identity in a New Generation

Brian C. Brewer, ed. Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 2011. 192 pp. (Paperback).

This book is a compilation and expansion of a series of sermons presented by the faculty of George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor University. The series, presented in 2010, was presented to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Baptist "distinctive tradition."

The introduction recognizes that, even though there will be disagreement among Baptists on some of the finer points of the distinctives ("It is even possible that the contributors to this volume will disagree with one another."), most Baptists will agree "in principle to these basic core convictions." Except for a mild swipe or two at the conservative leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention, the writers seem to make an attempt to distance themselves from the differences among Baptists and concentrate more on areas of broad agreement.

The book, which is primarily intended "to encourage and equip Baptist preachers," is also accessible enough to benefit the Baptist layperson. The style of writing is simple and clear, and the concepts are explained carefully and referenced heavily in footnotes at the end of each chapter. In the various chapters 14 Baptist distinctives are discussed, including the

priesthood of the believer, the authority of Scripture, salvation by faith and the autonomy of the local church.

Ancient Wine and the Bible

David R. Brumelow. Carrollton, Ga.: Free Church Press, 2011. 305 pp. (Paperback).

The Middle East is a hot and dry climate. In ancient times, there wasn't enough safe water to drink. They had no refrigeration. They had no choice but to drink wine.

Ever hear something like the above statement? Did you believe it? Many — maybe most — do, but according to David Brumelow only parts of it are true: the Middle East is hot and dry, and there was no refrigeration. In this book Brumelow challenges commonly accepted ideas about wine consumption in Bible times, stating flatly that much of it is untrue.

The author maintains the word "wine" in the Bible refers to both alcoholic and nonalcoholic drink, much like our use of "cider" today, consulting ancient primary documents by such writers as Pliny, Plutarch and Josephus to support his argument. He continues to cite ancient documents and modern-day scholars as he builds his case, offering convincing evidence for his position.

The book is well written and thorough. If you have questions (Didn't Jesus turn water into wine? How could they keep grape

juice from fermenting?), the author probably addresses them in the book.

The Story Lives On: God's Power Throughout Generations

Wanda S. Lee. Birmingham, Ala.: New Hope Publishers, 2012. 189 pp. (Paperback).

It is not surprising that Wanda Lee would write a book that challenges, encourages and inspires. It's not surprising she would use the vehicle of stories of missions work to do so — as the executive director of the National WMU, one would expect her mind to be on missions and encouraging others to participate.

In fact, I can't think of a single really surprising thing about this book, but I can think of a lot of reasons to read it.

In "The Story Lives On," Lee's second book, the author uses the power of story, from stories of Jesus and the apostles to career missionaries from the past and present and volunteer missionaries she has encountered, to show others "how Christ has made a difference in our struggles as well as our successes," and to "help them find a stronger path of their own."

So while not a book that jolts the reader out of her seat, "The Story Lives On" serves as a gentle reminder of the stories of the faithful from all walks of life and the need to build our own stories on the foundation of the gospel.

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. The Harbinger, Jonathan Cahn (Charisma Media)
2. Coming Home, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
3. The Struggle, Kentucky Brothers Series #3, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
4. Whispers in the Wind, Wild West Wind Series #2, Lauraine Snelling (Baker)
5. Lethal Legacy, Guardians of Justice Series #3, Irene Hannon (Baker)
6. Loving, Bailey Flanigan Series #4, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
7. A Lineage of Grace, Francine Rivers (Tyndale)
8. Redeeming Love, Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
9. The Fiddler, Home to Hickory Hollow Series #1, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
10. The Choice, Robert Whitlow (Thomas Nelson)

Nonfiction

1. Jesus Calling, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. KJV Standard Lesson Commentary 2012–2013, Standard Publishing Staff (Standard)
3. Not a Fan, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)
4. Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
5. Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. Boundaries, Henry Cloud and John Townsend (Zondervan)
7. Heaven Is for Real, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
8. KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Large-Print Edition 2012–2013, Standard Publishing Staff (Standard)
9. NIV Standard Lesson Commentary 2012–2013, Standard Publishing Staff (Standard)
10. The 5 Love Languages, Gary Chapman (Moody)



Photo courtesy of Rogers & Cowan Media

Guitarist Brian 'Head' Welch, formerly of Korn, now shares messages of hope and redemption at his concerts.

**"Contentment
comes from a
relationship with
Christ. You do
not have to look
anywhere else."**

**Brian 'Head' Welch
musician**

Transformation through CHRIST

Heavy metal rock star seeks to share light of Jesus

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When musician Brian "Head" Welch left the heavy metal band Korn in 2005, the announcement triggered significant speculation as people wondered what led the rock star out of the darkness and into the light.

During his tenure as Korn's guitarist the group earned Grammy awards and sold more than 30 million albums internationally, but Welch paid a high price for success. Wild parties, drugs and alcohol made his life spin out of control and left him feeling completely empty inside.

No matter what he did nothing could fill the void in his life — until he found Jesus.

Welch had an eye-opening experience of what his life was becoming after his wife could no longer care for their young daughter because of the effects of drugs.

Desperate to find help, Welch visited a church service.

"I remember crying out to God that night saying: 'Jesus, if You are real like that pastor said, then You've got to take these drugs from me. Come into my life. Come into my heart. Search me right now. Search my heart. You know that I want to quit these drugs. You know that I want to be a good dad to this kid. She is going to lose me if I don't quit. I need Your help.'"

During the weeks that followed, Welch continued performing with Korn and struggled with his decision to follow Christ. However he knew that he needed to change his lifestyle and come clean. One day while praying about his decision, he felt compelled to throw out all of his drugs and quit the band.

Realizing that he had been given a second chance at life, Welch wanted to spend it living for Christ.

"When Christ came into my life, I gained a new understanding of life," Welch said. "We were created to live for Him and to be with Him. It is the most incredible feeling, being exactly where you belong when you find Jesus. Contentment comes from

a relationship with Christ. You do not have to look anywhere else."

When Welch performs concerts and speaks at events, he is committed to sharing a message of hope and redemption.

"I want people to know that there is more than this world," Welch said. "Everyone lives for here and now, but these years are flying by so fast. If people would take their eyes off of this world and [put them] onto eternity, how different things would be. It's crazy how everyone is so focused on this place that is quickly fading away. Obviously you can still enjoy life, but you need that foundation of eternity and focusing on the things to come."

Welch has written several books about his transformation through Christ, including "Save Me From Myself" and "Washed By Blood." He has also written a devotional book, "Stronger: 40 Days of Metal and Spirituality." His music is also featured in the faith-based film "Hardflip" and he recently shared his testimony on a commercial for I Am Second.

'Jesus has changed my life'

"My favorite thing to do is talk about the Lord," Welch said. "But if I go to a rock concert or hang out with friends who aren't Christians, I know when to stop talking, just be a friend and let them see a change in me. I'm blessed to be alive today and to be able to tell others about how Jesus has changed my life. If He can do that for me, then He can do that for anyone."

"I'm not perfect by any means and I still have struggles, but I'm so much happier than I've ever been in my whole life — even on my bad days. My life has changed in every single way, definitely for the better. I went through some tough times to get to where I'm at today, but looking back, I think that I had to go through the pain to get to the peace."

"Now I want to be able to walk through any circumstance in life and be strong in the Lord. In order to get to that place you have to go through many trials. It says in Psalm 56:3, 'When I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord.' I think that's the mark of true maturity." ❧

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

UGA study finds local religions affect mutual funds

ATHENS, Ga. — New research from the University of Georgia (UGA) and Southern Methodist University and published in Management Science shows that the dominant local religion — whether Protestant or Catholic — significantly affects mutual fund behaviors.

Specifically the findings show that mutual funds headquartered in heavily Catholic areas tend to take more risks and funds in heavily Protestant areas take less risks, said lead author Tao Shu, assistant professor of banking and finance in the UGA Terry College of Business. The paper was co-authored with Eric Yeung of the Terry College and Johan Sulaeman of Southern Methodist University.

"Finding evidence that a local culture's religious beliefs affect mutual funds' risk-taking decisions is surprising because this is a very competitive industry," Shu said. "One would expect that profit chasing would eliminate all the impact of culture or anything else. But surprisingly, a local culture's religious beliefs still impact risk-taking decisions."

Because mutual funds make up about half of all institutional investments in the United States, the findings have widespread implications for how investors manage their money, he added.

According to Shu, it has been widely documented by surveys that while Catholics are more tolerant to speculative risk than the general population, Protestants are less tolerant to speculative risk than the general population.

Planned Parenthood charges dropped by prosecutor

OLATHE, Kan. — A Kansas prosecutor has dropped all criminal charges against a Kansas City-area Planned Parenthood facility accused of performing illegal late-term abortions. The decision ended a nine-year legal battle initiated by then-Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline to prosecute the abortion giant in criminal court.

Johnson County District Attorney Steve Howe announced that 32 misdemeanor charges against Planned Parenthood had been dismissed.

Those charges were the last part of a criminal case Kline filed in 2007 that initially included 107 criminal charges, 23 of which were felony charges of "false writing" for faking abortion reports.

Howe said his decision to end the case came after consulting current Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt. All three are Republicans.

The just-dropped charges dealt with allegations that the Planned Parenthood facility had in 16 cases violated a state law that restricted late-term abortions after an unborn child was viable, or could survive outside the womb. The facility was accused of not properly determining whether an unborn child was viable, but Howe said "extensive research" by his office led it to conclude that Planned Parenthood had met the tests spelled out in the law.

Credibility of Catholic clergy 'shredded' by abuse

PHILADELPHIA — The U.S. Catholic bishops' point man on sexual abuse has said that the hierarchy's credibility on fixing the problem is "shredded" and that the situation is comparable to the Reformation, when "the episcopacy, the regular clergy, even the papacy were discredited."

Bishop R. Daniel Conlon of Joliet, Ill., told a conference of staffers who oversee child safety programs in American dioceses he had always assumed that consistently implementing the bishops' policies on child protection, "coupled with some decent publicity, would turn public opinion around."

"I now know this was an illusion," Conlon, chairman of the bishops' committee for the protection of children and young people, said in an Aug. 13 address to the National Safe Environment and Victim Assistance Coordinators Leadership Conference in Omaha, Neb.

His talk was published in the Aug. 30 edition of Origins, an affiliate of Catholic News Service.

Conlon said the conviction of a high-ranking church official in Philadelphia for covering up clergy abuse and the upcoming trial of a bishop in Missouri on charges of failing to report a priest on suspicions of child abuse have contributed to a widespread impression that the bishops "have failed to keep their commitments." ❧