



Nov. 29, 2012
Vol. 177, No. 47

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

Toll free 1-800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

INSIDE



Alabama native plans to spend whole life living on mission

◆ Page 3



Christian workers in Israel, Gaza ask for prayers as violent fighting continues

◆ Page 5



100 years after Lottie Moon's death, IMB missionaries still risking it all

◆ Pages 8-9

Miracles on the border

Syrians encounter Jesus in unstable Middle East

The Christian relief team heard about the needy Syrian widow living outside a Lebanese Muslim village near the Syrian border, so they took food to her.

Apparently Jesus had been there first.

Refugees from the civil war in Syria, the Muslim widow and her three children had sought shelter in Lebanon — like more than 100,000 other Syrians. She was observing a traditional 40-day period of solitude to mourn her dead husband, so she had received nothing from the local Islamic aid society.

When the Christians knocked at her door, the widow appeared fully covered in black, including an opaque veil over her face. She explained her period of self-isolation. They offered to leave the food outside, but she unexpectedly invited them in. They sat with her and her children on the floor of the temporary dwelling.

"Who are you?" she asked anxiously.

God's love

"You don't know us, but we have great love in our hearts toward you," the team leader answered, explaining their reasons for helping Syrian refugees. "That love comes from God, who has worked in our lives."

To their amazement she responded by removing her veil — unheard of in her conservative Muslim culture. Then the words came flooding out.

"I want to tell you what happened to me yesterday," she said, her voice trembling with emotion. "As I was sleeping during the night, someone

knocked on my door. I was so scared, but I opened the window to see who it was. No one was there. After a while I heard the same knocking. My heart was beating so fast, so I went and sat beside the door, and I fell asleep there.

"As I was sleeping, someone put His hand on my shoulder. He said, 'You don't know Me. You have passed through a great pain. I experienced a great pain also. But I will not leave you alone. Tomorrow I will send you someone who will tell you about Me. Listen to him.'"

When she finished the story she began to weep. She turned to the team leader and said, "Tell me about this person that I saw in my dream."

Through his own tears the leader told her about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the friend of widows, orphans and outcasts. "This book that I'm

going to give you will explain to you about God's love," he promised, giving her a Bible along with additional aid to help her and her children survive the mourning period.

The widow later returned to Syria. No one knows for sure what has become of her. But God knows.

Expanding outreach

Sami, the Lebanese Christian pastor who told the widow about Jesus, has had similar experiences with other Muslims. He and several Christian partners have been reaching out to Muslim villages in Lebanon with the simple gospel message. They expanded their outreach to Syrian Muslims when refugees started streaming across the border in 2011.

"When we started to serve among those villages and communities, I

had a doubt in my heart," Sami admitted. "Will it work? Are we going to experience what we hear from different parts of the Middle East and the world about Muslims coming to know Jesus as Savior and Lord? It was a challenge, a discovery process for me personally and for many with us in the ministry. But as we have shared the gospel faithfully, the Lord is showing us signs of people who are opening up, asking questions and opening the door for us to reach a wider community.

"We started a couple of house groups in different areas with Lebanese and Syrian Muslims, and we are discipling those people. Some of them have come to know Christ. Others are discovering who Jesus is. They are showing signs of changing in their lives."

(See 'Syrian,' page 10)

SBOM offers safety, security training for missions volunteers

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Safety isn't promised us when we follow Christ to the ends of the earth, but that doesn't mean Alabama Baptists can't stave off unnecessary danger, Reggie Quimby said.

"There's risk and danger wherever we go," said Quimby, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). "We need to be equipped to the best of our ability."

For safety's sake, yes — but for

other reasons too, he said. "We don't want to compromise our mission of reaching people for Christ, the integrity of our missionary personnel or the integrity of the nationals that relate to Christian work in different parts of the world."

To help with this, the SBOM is offering safety and security training for Alabama Baptist missions volunteers called Faith-Focused Security Training (FFST). Fort Sherman Academy, one of the world's largest providers of travel-security and

crime-survival courses, will train volunteers through instruction and simulation.

"The training is tailored to four main areas — natural disaster, political disaster, criminal activity and health issues," Quimby said. "Through the course, volunteers will learn how to cope in worst-case scenarios."

The training will be Fort Sherman Academy's level A course, the most basic trip for volunteers who travel (See 'Higher-alert,' page 6)



BP photo

A Syrian refugee in Lebanon, hands clasped as if in prayer, hopes for better days.

COMMENT

The Heart of Southern Baptists

If you want to see the heart of Southern Baptists just look at the amount of money raised annually by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions. In one week — Dec. 2–9 this year — Southern Baptists will attempt to raise \$175 million for international missions.

The goal is the same as in 2011 when offerings totaled \$146.8 million. And while some may see missing the goal as a disappointment, no other Christian group comes close to raising that much money for a single cause in such a short time frame.

Southern Baptists give generously to the LMCO because we believe every person deserves the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. One's relationship to God through faith in Christ makes a difference in the address of one's eternal destination. That makes one's relationship to Christ the most important issue ever decided.

The world's population now stands at nearly 7 billion people and reaching every one of them with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ is a costly task. It costs money and it costs lives. About two-thirds of the total budget for Southern Baptists' International Mission Board (IMB) is annually spent on missionary support. Only about 15 percent of the budget funds state-side work that undergirds the international missions efforts.

Unreached and unengaged

To be sure, Southern Baptists are not in this work alone. National Christians across the globe share the good news of Jesus with family and friends. So do believers from other Christian groups. Many denominations send international missionaries. Yet despite the efforts of Christians for more than 2,000 years, there are still 3,133 people groups considered unreached and unengaged by any Christian group. That is 27.6 percent of the world's 11,342 recognized people groups.

When two-thirds of the world's population lives in geographical areas with restricted access to the gospel, there is no escaping the conclusion that much is yet to be done.

Because Southern Baptists care, Southern Baptists give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

IMB anticipates the annual offering will bring



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

in about 54 percent of its \$324 million budget for 2012. Do not miss the fact that more than half the money to support Southern Baptists' international missions program is raised in this special freewill offering. The offering comes in above the tithes of Southern Baptists and above their regularly scheduled giving. That is how much Southern Baptists care about reaching a lost world for Jesus Christ.

The Cooperative Program (CP), the primary channel of missions support for Southern Baptists, provides about 29 percent of IMB's budget. The other 17 percent comes from the World Hunger Offering, funds raised on missions fields and investments.

For the last fiscal year, CP receipts were about \$191.5 million. That is the amount of regular missions giving from the more than 40,000-SBC related churches across the nation for SBC causes. That means in one special emphasis, Southern Baptists will give about 75 percent as much to international missions as they do through their primary missions giving channel.

Occasionally someone will ask why more CP funds are not going to international missions. The best answer is an analogy of the local church. If a church put most of its money in evangelism, it might not have a ministries program to the human hurts of those it serves. If a church put most of its funds in a music program, it might not have a vibrant youth program. If a church put most of

its funds into facilities, it might not have a competent staff.

Just as a church must have a total program, Southern Baptists must have an evangelism program to reach the lost of this nation as well as overseas. We must provide Christian colleges and Baptist seminaries to educate and train young people for ministry. We must minister to the hungry and hurting in Jesus' name. The CP provides the framework that allows Southern Baptists to provide a balanced program of missions, ministries, education and more. Then special offerings like the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions allow Southern Baptists to provide extra financial support for their passions.

Still, international missions is the priority of the CP funds. Of that \$191 million, 51 percent, about \$98 million, went to the IMB. Said another

way, international missions receives slightly more than half of all CP dollars reaching the SBC. Again, that is how important Southern Baptists consider reaching the world for Christ.

Alabama Baptists have a rich heritage in financially supporting international missions through both the CP and LMCO. For the last SBC fiscal year Alabama was second to Georgia in CP giving — \$18.8 million to \$17.7 million. That is not bad considering Georgia has almost 400,000 more members than does Alabama.

"When two-thirds of the world's population lives in geographical areas with restricted access to the gospel, there is no escaping the conclusion that much is yet to be done."

Last year Alabama Baptists gave slightly more than \$10.8 million through the LMCO, placing them second behind North Carolina in total gifts. When CP and LMCO totals are added together, Alabama was again in second place among all SBC state conventions. That is not bad for a state convention whose membership places it eighth among state conventions.

This year Alabama Baptists seek to raise \$11.6 million through the offering. It will be a challenge but it can be done. Our passion is international missions. We do want every person to have an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. Through gifts to this special offering we put ourselves into the efforts to make it happen.

Use this special emphasis to learn more about what God is doing through Baptists around the world. With that expanded knowledge, pray earnestly for Southern Baptist representatives serving overseas, for national Christians and for efforts to sharing of the gospel. Then give a special offering above your tithe to help provide the opportunity for people to hear about God's love made known through Jesus Christ.

For more information, visit www.imb.org.

Letters to the Editor

REWARD OF ADOPTION

I just wanted to send out a "thank you" to *The Alabama Baptist* for the articles in the Nov. 15 issue on adoption. I adopted a 13-year-old boy from DHR this year. It has been by far the greatest reward in my life.

I absolutely believe the greatest missions field lies right before us here in Alabama.

There are so many children in the foster care system that need permanent and loving homes. In a time when public opinion desires smaller government, we as Christians (and as

Baptists) need to be ready to step up to the plate and minister more to the "widows and orphans."

Thank you and your staff for noting the need and awareness during National Adoption Month.

Larry E. Caver Jr.
Prattville, Ala.





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

PRINT
SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$13
Individual — \$20.95

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

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman James "Jim" Warren,
Jane Bellew, Stuart Calvert,
Travis Coleman, George A. Foust,
Helen W. Mayo, Ken Megginson,
Allan Murphy, Jim Oakley, Larry
Patterson, Lawrence Phipps,
Wayne Randall, Bradley Rushing,
Steve Scoggins, William Melton,
Amelia Pearson, Judy Stiefel,
Rick Lance (ex-officio), Mike
Shaw (ex-officio).

NEWS SERVICES

Baptist Press (BP), Associated
Baptist Press (ABP), Religion
News Service (RNS), Compass
Direct News (CDN), Evangelical
Press (EP), Forum 18 (F18),
Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER

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

ADDRESS CHANGE

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

'Nation's top Christian newspaper'

as judged by
Evangelical Press Association &
Religion Communicators Council



Photo by Hank Atchison

Members of Smith's recent missions team give out eyeglasses and medicine at a clinic as part of their work in Pindal.

Called to serve

By Joseph Rhea
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama native plans to give time, energy to serving God through missions his entire life

Shelby Smith, retired International Mission Board (IMB) worker, turned 85 this year.

He also led a missions trip to the village of Pindal, Ecuador — one of the least-reached areas of the country.

"There's a lot of demon-worship there," Smith said. "We fully expected to be attacked by a demon-possessed person, but I could feel the power of the living God there."

The medical missions team was able to treat 1,600 people in the region and saw 131 people profess faith in Christ.

"We'd been wanting to establish a beach-head where we could come back," Smith said, "but we had an evangelistic crusade right then." The team was even able to establish a house church in the home of the woman who ran a restaurant where the team ate.

Smith, a native of Jemison and the Birmingham area, felt called to overseas missions while studying for his master of theology degree at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"We were looking at a slideshow of Japanese people [in class]," he said. "There was an old couple who reminded me of my parents — an old man working and an old woman praying. (And God showed me) people are just the same in every place." At the time, Smith said, the U.S. held 5 percent of the world's population and 95 percent of its preachers.

Smith was unsure of how his wife, Betty, would feel about his call. But as it turned out, God laid the same call on both of their hearts at the same time even though they were 275 miles apart.

The Smiths applied to the then-Foreign Mission Board (now IMB) and were appointed in 1958. After a year of language school they moved to Ecuador. There they did evangelism



SHELBY & FRANCES SMITH

and planted churches until 1964, when their time was cut short by tragedy. During the birth of their fifth child an Ecuadorean doctor decided to do a cesarean section, and Betty Smith died in the surgery.

'Lord, help!'

"At that moment I felt all the powers of hell laughing at me and mocking me," Smith said. "I cried out, 'Lord, help!' And at that moment I could see Jesus standing on the earth with His head higher than the sun, bigger than the world. And He reached down and put His arms around me and said, 'Lo, I am with you always.'"

Smith returned to Alabama a widower with five children. The IMB put him on extended stateside assignment, but Smith knew he would return to the missions field eventually.

A few years later, Smith met Frances Higdon, who became his wife in 1968. Shelby and Frances Smith were sent to Trinidad and then Antigua by the IMB.

The Smiths planted churches in the Carib-

bean for 12 years, starting churches and then seeing national believers trained up to lead them.

"My philosophy there was to build a strong, stable, self-supporting church by any means possible for God's glory," Smith said.

In 1980 the IMB asked Smith to change his responsibilities: he began developing Sunday School curriculum for the Caribbean. The family moved to El Paso, Texas, and then to a home in Gulf Shores that Smith had bought in the 1970s.

By Smith's reckoning he wrote 1,500 Bible study lessons that were cycled among 200,000 people over the years.

Since retirement, Smith has used his freedom and his finances to continue missions work.

"I feel just as called now as I've been since 1958," Smith said.

Though now residents of Greensboro, the Smiths take missions trips with whomever they can. Their most recent missions team consisted primarily of people from Hale Baptist Association, including Dee McGuire, pastor of Greensboro Baptist Church. Smith also preaches occasionally, especially on the value of volunteer missions.

"I don't like to hear people give excuses about it," Smith said. "I'm 85 and still going."

Reflecting on his experiences, Smith said he has learned the importance of living life God's way.

"God will bless you all you will let Him," he said. "You just have to live and do it His way."

Smith plans to return to Pindal in July 2013 with a team to do Vacation Bible School and more medical missions. As long as he lives, he plans to give his time and his energy to serving God's kingdom. ☛



A useful resource

By Brian Harris
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Check out Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' new website for ministry helps

Even before I officially joined the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in February of this year, we began talking about the need to refresh the current www.ALSBOM.org website. While the previous design was great, it definitely was showing age in several ways.

Studying our analytics (how people use our site), we discovered that a growing number of people are using mobile devices such as iPads and smartphones to access the site. The previous design relied on some technology that did not translate to these devices, so we changed it to be more compatible with tablets and phones.

The previous site was based on a smaller screen resolution than what is typically used today. When viewing our site in its native size, there was a lot of room at the bottom and on the sides.

Research shows that people are willing to scroll down a little bit for content, expanding our potential space even more. The new site now better takes advantage of these changes.

Sharing resources

Over time, as we outgrew www.ALSBOM.org, we also created several new sites. Each site had its own unique feel and address, but in some ways the sites seemed to divide us in our external marketing. Also, with so many sites and only one person dedicated to working on our websites and social media, it was easy for some of the smaller sites to get lost in the mix for maintenance. We decided that to better reflect us, these sites would be incorporated back into the main site, sharing some resources but in many cases still maintaining a unique look and feel. At the very top of the new site you'll notice tabs that go to some of these previous sites like GreatCommissionGPS.com and SBDR.org. Also, RickLance.com was integrated as a blog while TheStudentHub.org, [\[sionStudents.org\]\(http://sionStudents.org\) and the student ministry blog formed one new site.](http://OneMis-</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

Back in 2008 when the previous website was introduced, social media was in its infancy. Now it's a necessity, since we use it daily at the state board and in our personal lives. With our new design, you will find links to our social media pages at the top of every page of the site, and you can share any content you find via share buttons located at the bottom. You will even find feeds from our Facebook and Twitter accounts on our home page. At the top of every page, you also may notice a picture area that is very similar to the cover photo that you find at the top of your Facebook page.

We researched many sites, from the largest corporations to local Baptist churches, and found ideas that were cutting-edge yet comfortable for our average user. An example of that is our mega menus. These have allowed us to bring ministry areas to the surface, digging them up from beneath the office structure that required knowing how the state board staff is organized. We also wanted to emphasize that our audience is churches within Alabama, so we needed our site to feel comfortable and easy to use for people who are used to visiting church websites.

We've introduced several new items that you may have seen integrated in the previous state board site as they were developed for the new site. All of these are free or low-cost items that you can use for your websites:

- ▶ Google calendars have been used to develop event calendars for each ministry area. They also serve as central event calendars.
- ▶ Wufoo was integrated to use for event registration and forms.
- ▶ Our relationship with PayPal and its credit card

payment integration through Wufoo has been a great new resource.

▶ Mailchimp was brought in as our email marketing tool. It allows you to receive content that is most relevant to you and where you serve. Its integration in Wufoo has proven extremely valuable.

▶ We still use YouTube to share videos, but most of the videos we have produced are now available through Vimeo, which adds the ability to download any videos you may need to use in your ministry. With Vimeo, we also can control the environment surrounding our videos so that objectionable content isn't accidentally accessed.

▶ With so many areas for photos on our site, we chose Flickr as a solution for storage and sharing. These images are available for churches to download freely and use as needed.

In the end, what you see now at www.ALSBOM.org is the culmination of nearly nine months of work and the combination of seven websites and more than 1,000 pages of content.

None of this would have been possible without the full support of Executive Director Rick Lance, Missions Support Team Leader Bobby DuBois and Communications Coordinator Doug Rogers. These guys bought into a vision drawn out on a sheet of paper and trusted me and our partners at Details Communication to make it happen. I'm personally very proud of the work that has been completed on this project and look forward to finishing up a few more tweaks.

I hope and pray that you find the site to be a useful resource today and for years to come, that it helps to further your ministry and meets its goal to represent our motto: One Mission — The Great Commission; One Program — The Cooperative Program; Many Ministries — Great Commission Ministries. 🙏



HARRIS



IMB photo

As the death toll rises and the conflict escalates between Gaza and Israel, Christian workers in the area are asking believers to 'pray the news,' for God to bring real peace to the area and open hearts to the peace only He can bring.

Praying in the midst of hard times

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

Christian workers in Israel, Gaza ask for prayers as violent fighting continues

The serrated smoke trails of rockets make jagged cuts through the cloudless sky over Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

And Stephen Johnson, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among Palestinians, said he feels just as rough around the edges.

Just after arriving back in the West Bank on Nov. 16, he fell asleep and awoke to find that a rocket had hit not too far from the house where he was. "We are fine — a little jittery, but OK," he said.

He's not the only one who's jittery — a phone call to friends who are believers in the Gaza Strip confirmed that.

"They are all OK but very frightened," Johnson said. "They've been here many times before."

Gaza and Israel have a history of conflict. Hundreds of intermittent rockets have been fired from Gaza in recent years, and in the winter of 2008–2009, Israel's Operation Cast Lead killed more than 1,000 Palestinians and 13 Israelis.

With the current fighting, a friend of Johnson's in Gaza told him it's dangerous to be in the street, and there's very little movement outside. Grocery stores are empty.

"People have bought up supplies in case the situation gets worse," Johnson said.

And they pray that "worse" won't mean "closer" — the Palestinian Ministry of Interior office, about 200 yards from Johnson's friends, was hit by Israeli rockets, he said.

Since Israel launched its Operation Pillar of Defense on Nov. 14, it has bombed 1,350 "terror targets" in Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. More than 110 Palestinians and three Israelis have been

killed, according to BBC News. At least 23 of those happened on the fifth day of fighting Nov. 18, making it the deadliest so far.

U.S. President Barack Obama said he supported Israel's right to defend itself and called for Gaza to stop firing on Israel and work toward peace.

"There's no country on earth that would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders," Obama said at a press conference in Thailand during a Southeast Asian tour, according to NBC.

By the evening of Nov. 13, Israel's Iron Dome shield had intercepted 245 rockets fired from Gaza in a three-day period, according to the Israeli army. About 1,000 rockets have been fired since the beginning of the conflict and nearly 100 in the days that preceded the conflict. Tel Aviv has repeatedly been the target.

So far the battle has been largely restricted to rocket fire exchange. News outlets reported the strong possibility that it could escalate into a ground offensive. At press time Nov. 20, Egypt said Israel had put those plans on hold to engage in cease-fire talks, but despite those claims, Israeli airstrikes had been stepped up overnight.

Where Ben Martin is, people aren't as worried about the rockets as they are about the possibility of others getting involved with force, such as Egypt or Hezbollah, the Shia resistance group based in Lebanon. Egypt's president stated early in the conflict that it would not leave Gaza on its own, according to BBC.

"The main concern is the secondary threat," said Martin, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among Jews. "In these days, what do we do? We're told

to be sober-minded so that we may be able to pray."

Pray for the Jews in Israel and for people under fire in both Israel and Gaza, he said. "We don't just sit with our hands folded — we look for opportunities."

Plea for prayers

One believer in Israel whom Martin knows has already had the chance to share with a family when he was taking cover with them as rockets approached.

"What we need is people who will pray for the believers in Israel and for the believers in Gaza to be bold to share in the midst of hard times," Martin said.

He, Johnson and others in the region say

there is a ready harvest among the Middle Eastern peoples.

"Pray for safety but also that they would have opportunities to share the hope that they have," Johnson said.

He and Martin challenged Christians to "pray the news."

"As you watch the news, write down the names and places, then turn the TV off and pray the news," he said. "It's not a political statement or a stand, but asking the God of heaven to invoke His will in the situation and to bring true and lasting peace. With that, He is well pleased."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

**"We don't just sit
with our hands
folded — we look
for opportunities."**

**Ben Martin
Christian worker**



Reuters photo

An Israeli police officer gestures in front of a burning car after a rocket fired by Palestinian militants in Gaza landed in the southern city of Ashkelon on Nov. 18.

Across Alabama's Associations

BIBB

► **First Church, Woodstock**, will host the Blackwood Brothers Quartet on Tuesday, Dec. 4, 7 p.m. For information call 205-938-7479. Larry Bonner is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► The Woman's Missionary Union of **First Church, Birmingham**, will host Janet Erwin, editor of *Mosaic*, highlighting Lottie Moon and international missions Dec. 4, 10:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. Lunch will follow. For information and lunch reservations call 205-870-3888. Charles T. Carter is interim pastor. ► **Liberty Park Church, Vestavia Hills**, will host Gordon Mote in concert Dec. 9, 6 p.m. For information call 205-969-1236. Scott Guffin is pastor. ► **Meadow Brook Church, Birmingham**, will hold the 18th annual 2012 Meadow Brook 5K and Fun Run on Dec. 15. For information visit www.meadowbrookruns.org.

COVINGTON

► **R. Keith Tankersley** is the new pastor of **Carolina Church, Andalusia**. He holds a master of divinity degree and doctor of theology degree from Andersonville Theological Seminary in Camilla, Ga. He previously served as the pastor of DeSoto Church, Shubuta, Miss. He and his wife, Tina, have three children.

JUDSON

► **Trinity Church, Headland**, will hold "Bethlehem's Joy," an outdoor retelling of the birth of Christ through music and drama Dec. 1-2, beginning at 6 p.m. Chairs will be provided. Coffee, hot chocolate and cookies provided afterward. Dan Sheppard is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **West Highland Church, Athens**, will host a winter youth concert with the Zach Flemming

Band and various local artists from North Alabama on Dec. 8. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 7 p.m. Robert Ekis will speak. For information call 256-565-5331. Jerry Smith is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Montgomery Association** will hold the 4th annual Christmas Toy Sale at Heritage Church, Montgomery, on Dec. 8. This is an invitation-only, community outreach event for Montgomery families in need. The association is in need of both volunteers to assist with the event and donors to provide new toys for children (infants to 18 years old.) For information call Lisa Rose at 334-271-6794. Ken May is director of missions.

MUD CREEK

► **Crossroad Church, Hueytown**, will hold Christmas Market on Dec. 8, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. A variety of arts and crafts will be on display.

SHELBY

► The combined choirs of **First Church, Pelham**, and **First Church, Clanton**, will hold "The Great I Am in Living Pictures" presentation at First, Pelham, on Dec. 9, 6 p.m. More than 100 voices will be blended in worship. A nursery will be provided for children 5 years old and under. Mike Shaw is pastor. ► **South Shelby Church, Shelby**, will hold "A Walk Through Bethlehem" on Dec. 6-8, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m. and Dec. 9, 3:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Take an outside tour where you can hear the sweetest story on earth and see an old marketplace, donkeys, shepherds and more. T.W. Minor Jr. is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► The music ministry of **Sulphur Springs Church, Trussville**, will hold The Singing Christmas Wreath with the theme, "The Night Before Christmas," on Dec. 7, 7 p.m. and Dec. 9, 4 p.m. The wreath

stands 11 feet tall with 3,600 lights and 1,000 feet of garland, with the adult choir comprising the heart of the wreath. A nursery will be provided. Everett Sollie is minister of music. Bobby Shipp is pastor.

SULPHUR SPRINGS

► **Joel Robbins** is the new director of missions for **Sulphur Springs Association**. He previously served churches in Alabama and Wyoming and is retired from the U.S. Army. He and his wife, Freida, have three children, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.



ROBBINS

TUSCALOOSA

► **Lakewood Church, Northport**, will host Don Piper, author of "90 Minutes in Heaven," on Dec. 2-5. Piper will speak Dec. 2, 6 p.m. and Dec. 3-5, 7 p.m. For information call 205-333-0414. Scott McQueen is pastor.

WALKER

► **Mahlon T. LeCroix** is the new pastor of **First Church, Cordova**.



LECROIX

He holds a bachelor's degree in ministry from The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, Fla. He previously served as pastor of Beulah Anna Church, Leonia, Fla. He and his wife, Ashley, have two children. ☞



White Pond Baptist celebrates 100th anniversary

White Pond Baptist Church, White City, marked its centennial in a unique way. During the three Sundays leading up to homecoming weekend Sept. 22-23, several special events were planned for church members.

On the first Sunday of the anniversary month, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance spoke to the Autauga Baptist Association church. The second Sunday of the month marked "old-fashioned Sunday" where church members dressed up. On the third Sunday of the month a lighted cross, which was purchased by the church for a wall of its education building, was put up. To pay for the cross church members compiled and printed a cookbook titled "Celebrating Our Roots — 100 Years."

The anniversary weekend began Sept. 22 with an afternoon barbecue and singing. According to Dora Huett, who served with two other church members on the homecoming committee, the Victory Quartet from Georgia sang, and ice cream and cake followed the singing. Two cakes — one for Saturday and one for Sunday — were made for the 100th anniversary weekend. "We enjoyed it very much," Huett said of the day.

The worship service Sept. 23 again featured Victory Quartet as well as church member soloists.

Former pastor Lamar Lyon delivered the sermon, and a representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a plaque.

The sanctuary was decorated with mums purchased by church members in honor of loved ones. There were 84 mums total in all different colors, Huett said.

After the service the approximately 225 attendees enjoyed a lunch set up in both the church fellowship hall and overflow tables outdoors.

"We had a lot of visitors" that day, Huett said, adding that Pastor Woodie Turner helped the committee plan for the weekend.

Turner noted the centennial was "special" and it was evident how White Pond Baptist had touched so many lives through the years. He said he believes the reason the church "has stood the test of time" is because its foundation is the Word of God. "As long as that is the case White Pond will be here for a long time," he said. (Julie Payne)

Bethsadia Baptist marks 125th anniversary

September 30 marked the 125th anniversary celebration for Bethsadia Baptist Church, Cullman. According to Linda Pace, who served on the church's birthday committee, about 120 people were in attendance for the special day.

The morning worship service featured two of the church's former pastors as well as six former ministers of music who all spoke a few words to the congregation.

One of the former ministers of music, Ronnie Cook, sang, and another former minister of music, Rob Harris, played the piano. The church choir also provided music.

Pace presented a reading of church minute excerpts from a record book dating back to 1910, and Pastor Jim Abbott then spoke to the congregation.

A lunch was provided in the fellowship hall after the service, and a singing with The Soul Seekers quartet followed.

Pace noted that various memorabilia items, such as old church bulletins and family portraits of some of the church's original members, were displayed in the fellowship hall. There also was a slideshow presentation featuring former members and pastors, and a shadow box was displayed that included some church minutes.

"I think everyone really enjoyed it," Pace said of the day.

According to Abbott, who has served at the West Cullman Baptist Association church more than four years, Bethsadia Baptist is a "missions-minded church." He believes the church is going in the right direction and that "people are excited about what is going on." He added that God is doing a great work, and "we believe He's continuing to do that." (Julie Payne)

Higher-alert situations call for better preparation

(continued from page 1)
occasionally to low-risk areas. Topics will include travel security, code of conduct, crime and hostage survival, dealing with government detention and questioning, countersurveillance, rescue behaviors, minimizing exploitation and basic crisis policy.

All instruction will be done from a faith-based perspective.

The first training will be Jan. 31 — 9 a.m.-4 p.m. with lunch included — at the Baptist Building in Montgomery, with a second planned for August.

"This is required for anyone who is a part of our Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections strategy, but it is encouraged and available for any Alabama Baptist doing any

kind of missions work at home or abroad," Quimby said.

Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections is the state's new missions strategy, aimed at connecting overseas missionaries from Alabama with churches and associations here in the state. This supports missionaries and provides strategic volunteer opportunities for Alabama Baptist groups. (Read more about it at www.thealabamabaptist.org. Type "Alabama Acts 1:8" in the search field.)

"If we are going to be encouraging teams to support our missionaries, we want to make sure they are trained in security procedures," said Greg Pouncey, pastor of First Baptist Church Tillman's Corner, Mobile, who presented

the security training aspect of Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections to the messengers at the state convention annual meeting Nov. 13.

Quimby agreed.

"The security training is our due diligence in preparing churches for the worst-case scenario," he said. "We've been going in unprepared in the past, and the higher-alert situations worldwide are calling for us to be better prepared."

For more information about FFST or to register, call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, email vgardner@alsbom.org or visit www.alsbom.org/ffst. For more information about Fort Sherman Academy's training curriculum, visit www.fortsherman.org. ☞

FOLLOW US ON

twitter

@AlabamaBaptist

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

'Poverty Bean Game' raises \$30,000 for world hunger

AMITE, La. — Instead of preaching a sermon for World Hunger Sunday on Oct. 14, Pastor Mike Foster divided his Amite, La., congregation into three groups and played the Poverty Bean Game. The game demonstrates the disparity of wealth between developed countries like the United States and Third World countries like Haiti.

The congregation was divided into three groups. Five percent of the congregation represented the First World countries and received 20 beans of "money" per person. Fifteen percent of them represented the Second World countries with 15 beans per person, and the remaining 80 percent represented Third World countries with 10 beans per person. To win, or at least survive, each person had to have 17 beans at the end of the game.

As the members stood in line to purchase index cards representing food, water, shelter and medicine from "stores" in the sanctuary, two people acted as "natural disasters" and could take as many beans from each person as they wanted to. First-Worlders could take a bean from a Second World resident and they in turn could take a bean from Third World residents.

Several "missionaries" handed out one bean each to people, "but they ran out of beans pretty quickly," Foster said.

"Just about everybody in the First World survived and just about everybody in the Second World survived but we quickly realized most of the Third World died out," Foster said.

Exercises like the Poverty Bean Game can provide a small but powerful dose of reality for Americans who don't realize how difficult life is for the majority of the world's people, said Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response.

English Baptists downsizing to better minister

DIDCOT, Oxfordshire — The Baptist Union of Great Britain will downsize its national staff from 46 to 32 employees and change the way it works with associations and Baptist colleges to better serve local churches in the 21st century.

Changes approved by the Baptist Union Council on Nov. 12–14 at the Hayes Christian Conference Centre in Derbyshire followed a yearlong study prompted by financial concerns but broadened to re-examine mission structures designed for the 20th century.

The driving vision for the shift, which also includes reducing the size of the governing council, is to create a more flexible structure that moves decisions closer to the local church.

"This is a very painful time, but it is clearly right for the Baptist Union to make serious financial cuts," Baptist Union General Secretary Jonathan Edwards told the *Baptist Times*. "My colleagues and I at Baptist House have all done our work out of a profound sense of God's call, and we appreciate the sensitivity and support of the denomination as we seek to discover His will for our future."

Congress has largest Southern Baptist representation

WASHINGTON — Southern Baptist representation in Congress increased in the latest election — its greatest in recent history.

Each Southern Baptist up for re-election in the Senate and House of Representatives held his seat Nov. 6. In addition, five members of Southern Baptist churches won races as nonincumbents.

Five Southern Baptists joined the House of Representatives, bringing the total to 35. One Southern Baptist church member gained election to the Senate, making the total six.

The number of Southern Baptist representatives appears to be a record — based on a review of election results since 1994, when a surge of Southern Baptist and other evangelical Christian candidates for Congress began. That total of House members, coupled with the number of senators, seemingly would add up to the largest Southern Baptist contingent ever in Congress.

Virginia Baptists vote to sever ties over gay ordination

RICHMOND — The Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) has upheld a leadership committee's decision to end the state association's affiliation with a church that ordained an openly gay man to the ministry earlier this fall.

In the opening session of its annual meeting Nov. 13, BGAV messengers voted 426–164 against a motion to refer the decision for review by a study committee. In October the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's executive committee asked Ginter Park Baptist Church, Richmond, to withdraw its membership by Dec. 31, after the congregation ordained an openly gay man in September. If Ginter Park declines to withdraw by that date the BGAV will no longer accept its financial contributions, essentially ending the church's affiliation with the state association.

Forgotten tool

Catechisms can lay groundwork for 'mature' faith

By Joseph Rhea
The Alabama Baptist

What would you say if you were asked what the purpose of human life is? What biblical text or truth would you use?

If you had ever learned Keach's Catechism, a Baptist catechism published in 1693, an answer would probably come to mind as soon as you heard the question:

► Question 2: What is the chief end of man?

► Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

A catechism is a brief systematic theology presented in a question-and-answer format. The succinct style makes the theological truths of a catechism as easy to memorize as possible. The answers of a catechism are taken from careful, systematic Bible study. A full catechism will contain Scripture references for each answer.

While for many people "catechism" is a dusty word associated with Catholicism, question-and-answer catechisms were actually developed by the first generations of Protestant reformers. As they worked with Christians who were largely uneducated, pastors like Martin Luther and John Calvin developed catechisms to help Christians understand the essential truths of their faith. Pastors like Benjamin Keach, John Broadus and Charles Spurgeon also developed catechisms that taught specifically Baptist distinctives.

"The two most important things any church can do," said Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, "are first to share the gospel with lost people — evangelism. The second most important thing is to pass off the Christian faith to the next generation. ... Catechesis is meant to be the process

of teaching the faith to a younger generation in a way that does not compromise the faith."

Catechesis — the process of teaching catechisms to children — does not create saving faith. Kathy Keller, the wife of Tim Keller, who serves as pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, described it as "laying the kindling and logs in the fireplace, so that when the spark of the Holy Spirit ignites your child's heart there will be a steady, mature blaze."

While education by catechism is vanishingly rare among Southern Baptists today, it does occur. Todd Wilson, pastor of Grace Covenant Baptist Church, Hoover, said the church has employed catechesis in its teaching for the seven-and-a-half years he has served as its pastor. Grace Covenant Baptist uses "The [Westminster] Shorter Catechism: A Baptist Version" and, for children, the "Truth and Grace Memory Book" children's catechism from Founders Press.

"The beauty of the catechism ... is it's really a systematic theology being set forth in biblical teaching," Wilson said.

Wilson encourages his Sunday School teachers to use the catechism as a supplement to the Bible lessons they teach children. Connecting a story to a theological truth the children have already memorized reinforces the lesson, he said.

"The Bible itself is the most important thing," he said. "Any way we can use to get biblical truth into

the children's hearts is worthwhile."

Parents at Grace Covenant have provided "nothing but encouragement" about the church's use of catechism in children's education, Wilson said.

He also references the catechism in his preaching from time to time. He recently used the question given at the beginning of this story in a sermon on John 5, in which the

Jews accuse Jesus of making Himself equal to God. Wilson used the catechism question to discuss how, since Jesus is part of the Trinity, glorifying Him is a necessary part of glorifying God.

While historically catechesis has been part of both Calvinistic and Arminian Baptist churches, virtually all the most famous catechisms have Calvinistic teaching

about God's election. Since Baptist churches hold that each congregation, under the teaching of the Bible and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, has the right to determine what it believes, George encouraged individual churches to appoint "godly, well-trained, biblical leaders" to develop catechisms that reflect their beliefs. However, he said, an association or a broader group could develop a catechism for individual Baptist churches to use.

An extensive list of historical Baptist catechisms can be found at www.reformedreader.org/cc/bcat.htm. "The Shorter Catechism: A Baptist Version" and the "Truth and Grace Memory Book" set can be ordered through Grace & Truth Books.

"Catechesis is ... teaching the faith to a younger generation in a way that does not compromise the faith."

**Timothy George
dean of Beeson Divinity
School at Samford**

Canadian case important for religious liberty

A "watershed case" regarding freedom of expression on the subject of homosexuality was handed down in Canada this fall, giving hope to religious liberty advocates in the United States who say the ruling could impact future U.S. decisions.

"Matters of morality, including the perceived morality of certain types of sexual behavior, are topics for discussion in the public forum. Freedom of speech does not just protect polite speech," Alberta Appeals Court Justice Clifton O'Brien wrote in the ruling.

The case, which played out in the courts for a decade, involved Canadian pastor Stephen Boissin, who wrote letters to the editor of his local newspaper expressing his religious views on homosexuality and

his concern that the behavior was being promoted in public schools.

A University of Calgary professor reported the letters to the Alberta Human Rights Commission, accusing him of hate speech. The commission sided with the professor and fined the pastor \$5,000, prohibiting him from further expression of his views on homosexuality.

'Unpopular' views

But in what appears to be a final victory for the pastor, according to Alliance Defending Freedom, Alberta's highest court affirmed in October Boissin's right to publicly express his religious views.

"Public expression should not be censored simply because the views expressed are unpopular," read an ADF blog post Nov. 2. "This legal

victory has great significance for religious expression. As American courts look more frequently to international jurisprudence for guidance, this victory for freedom of expression has important implications for preserving and promoting religious freedom in America."

Gerald Chipeur, a Canadian attorney who is affiliated with ADF, said, "The tools of censorship should not be available to prohibit freedom of religious expression in Canada. The court rightly found that this type of religious speech is not 'hate' speech."

The three justices stated that "Boissin and others have the freedom to think ... that homosexuality is sinful and morally wrong ... (and) they have the right to express that thought to others." (BP)



IMB missionaries today are answering the call to extreme climates and hard places in order to share the gospel with unreached people. They

Lottie Moon gave her life to answer question, 'How many can I reach?'

She died on board a ship 100 years ago Christmas Eve — sick, exhausted, brokenhearted over leaving her beloved Chinese friends in their time of suffering.

It was a bittersweet end to a long and fruitful life.

But it wasn't the end of Lottie Moon's story. What is it about this woman that has inspired so many Southern Baptists, for so many years, to give their own lives and treasure to God's mission?

Born into privilege on a pre-Civil War plantation in Virginia, rambunctious young Lottie received the best education money could buy. But the difference between the fine words she heard from adults and the realities of life troubled her.

A young, unbelieving Lottie told classmates her middle initial, D., stood for "Devil." She pulled pranks, missed chapel and scoffed at religion. She was a brilliant scholar, however, and became one of the most educated women of her era. But knowledge alone couldn't satisfy her soul. She began a search for truth.

Lottie's spiritual struggle came to a dramatic climax one night, sealing her commitment to serve God and others. She witnessed the ravages of Civil War, which destroyed the old society she had known. Matured by the experience, but just as independent as ever, she boldly joined her sister to become one of the first single female missionaries to China.

Little did she know what lay ahead.

Lottie arrived in North China in 1873 just as the last imperial dynasty was beginning to crumble. She struggled to learn the ways of Chinese culture as her sister suffered mental and emotional breakdowns. Despite bitter opposition from many Chinese — and the bunker mentality of other missionaries — Lottie was determined to take the message of God's love to the vast countryside. She went to the villages, often on her own.

"Here I am working alone in a city of many thousand inhabitants," she wrote in one of her many letters home. "It is grievous to think of these human souls going down to death without even one opportunity of hearing the name of Jesus. How many can I reach? The needs of these people press upon my soul, and I cannot be silent."

She experienced isolation and loneliness. She had a chance to marry and return home. Her response: "God had first claim on my life, and since the two conflicted, there could (be) no question about the result." She persisted through war and famine, because the Chinese needed to know her Lord.

Laying the foundation

Disease, turmoil and lack of co-workers threatened to undo Lottie's work. But she gave her life completely to God, helping lay the foundation of what would become the modern Chinese church, one of the fastest-growing Christian movements in the world.

She once wrote home, "A young man should ask himself not if it is his duty to go to the lost but if he may dare stay at home."

Lottie Moon died at 72 — ill and in declining health after she had made sacrifices for decades for her beloved Chinese.

Who can relate to her today? Many Americans, particularly young people, have all the material things they want — but it's not enough. In an aimless era, they crave direction and purpose for their lives. The more challenging the cause, the better. Her life

speaks powerfully to a generation desperate for meaning and heroic role models.

Thousands have followed Lottie's example during the century since her death — going just as boldly, obediently, sacrificially.

But not without Southern Baptists' gifts to support them. Giving has its own call to obedience and sacrifice.

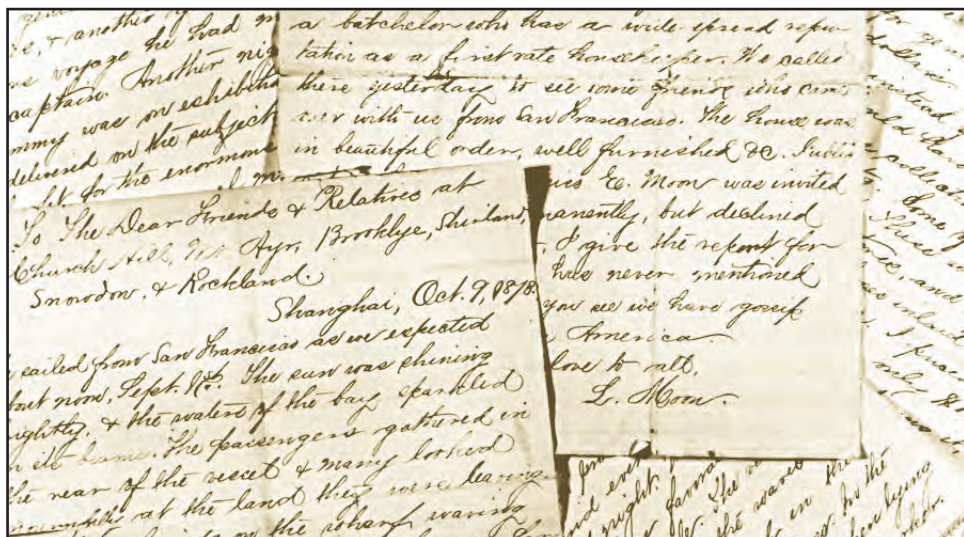
Lottie said it best 100 years ago: "How many there are ... who imagine that because Jesus paid it all, they need pay nothing, forgetting that the prime object of their salvation was that they should follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ in bringing back a lost world to God."

She followed to the end — and changed history. A new generation will change it again, if you make it possible for them to go.

Southern Baptists' gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and through the Cooperative Program help Southern Baptist missionaries around the world share the gospel. Give to the offering through your local Southern Baptist church or online at imb.org/offering, where there are resources for church leaders to promote the offering. Download related videos at imb.org/lmcovideo. (IMB)



IMB photo
You're living the legacy of missionary Lottie Moon who gave her life to reach the Chinese.



IMB photo
Lottie Moon wrote missions support letters from China and inspired Southern Baptists to pray, give and go. 'Oh! that my words could be as a trumpet call stirring the hearts of my brethren and sisters to pray, to labor, to give themselves to this people,' she wrote.

"How many there are ... who imagine that because Jesus paid it all, they need pay nothing, forgetting that the prime object of their salvation was that they should follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ in bringing back a lost world to God."

Lottie Moon

100 years after Lottie Moon's death, IMB missionaries still risking it all

Nepalese pastors brave threats and bombs to see Christ's name glorified in the Himalayas.

Believers in West Africa bury a Christian woman, uniting in a strong witness to the Songhai community that refused her a proper burial. In Central Asia, an International Mission Board (IMB) doctor's greatest concern isn't for safety but that his ministry will make a difference for the Kingdom.

In war-torn Somalia of the '90s, an IMB worker knew he'd have to be willing to die for Jesus — an experience that led him to spend years learning how and why believers in persecution grow unimaginably strong in the faith.

This year's Week of Prayer stories remind Southern Baptists that engaging people groups in the world's hard places comes with risk and sacrifice, not just for missionaries but also for all who obediently choose to be His heart, His hands, His voice.

Most of us aren't threatened because of our faith, but we need to be in prayer for those who are — not that persecution will end, but that believers in persecution will stay courageous and bold.

This December is the 100th anniversary of the death of Lottie Moon, the namesake of Southern Baptists' offering that supports global missionaries.

The emphasis celebrates her life and looks to her as a portrait of obedience — a single woman who went to China despite the risks and persisted through war and famine because the Chinese needed to know

her Lord. Lottie wrote home to the Foreign Mission Board (now IMB): "Please say to the missionaries they are coming to a life of hardship, responsibility and constant self-denial," she warned.

But she acknowledged, "If the joy of the Lord be their strength, the blessedness of the work will more than compensate for its hardships."

Giving also is a call to obedience and sacrifice. Gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) enable IMB missionaries — going just as boldly as Lottie — to live and work at the forefront of lostness and to extend a witness through their full-time ministry.

Each individual and church is called to be His heart, hands and voice and to continually take the next step in obedience so that Christ is glorified, even to the ends of the earth.

The core question is, then, "What am I doing and what is my church doing to be obedient, to BE His heart, hands and voice, no matter the cost?"

Getting involved

Every penny given to the LMCO for International Missions is used to support nearly 5,000 Southern Baptist missionaries as they share the gospel overseas.

Give to the offering through your local Southern Baptist church or online at imb.org/offering, where there are resources for church leaders to promote the offering.

Download related videos at imb.org/entirechurchvideo. (IMB)

WEEK OF PRAYER
for International Missions and
International Missions Study
Dec. 2-9



**LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS OFFERING**
National Goal: \$175 million
Alabama's Goal: \$11.6 million

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING

Syrian Muslims turning to God, sharing with others transforming power in their lives

(continued from page 1)

A Muslim community leader the Christians befriended last year helped them gain entrance to the homes of many Muslims — Lebanese and Syrian. During those visits he heard the gospel message of God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ perhaps 100 times.

At the beginning of one such visit the Muslim leader walked up to a refugee family, pointed at them and said, "Are you dead or alive?"

The family was taken aback; so were the Christians. He repeated his question: "Are you dead or alive?" Then he pointed at the Christians and declared, "These people have a book, and it's going to tell you how to find life. You need to read it."

Christian worker David James, who participated in the visit, marveled, "This is a Muslim guy who probably has never read the New Testament himself. But he's opening doors for us now because he saw something different in us as he heard the things that we were sharing."

In another village the relief team made a repeat visit to the home of an influential Syrian Muslim. He knows many other needy families, so they brought a large supply of food for distribution.

"We don't need your boxes of food," the Syrian leader said. "What we need is somebody to come and teach us how to walk in the way of Jesus and how we

can forgive one another. We don't know how to live with each other." The Christians were happy to oblige.

Perhaps the boldest new evangelist in Lebanon, however, is an older Syrian woman whose home has become a center for teaching truth.

Asking questions

Sami met Noora at the end of a long, exhausting day of aid deliveries to refugees. He was ready to go home, but his guide insisted on one more stop to a particularly needy group of families. Reluctantly he agreed. They distributed food portions and New Testaments along with a simple gospel presentation.

Noora, one of the Syrian Muslim women in the home, started asking questions about baptism. As it turned out, she already was reading the New Testament. She had plenty of other questions about Jesus: How do you address Him? How does He differ from the other prophets?

"We read Matthew, the first chapters, about Jesus' incarnation and that He is Immanuel," Sami recounted. "Immanuel means 'God with us.'"

"I don't understand," Noora replied.

Sami explained the concept of a king visiting his people disguised in plain clothing and humility, yet remaining in every aspect a king. He told her about Jesus'

sinless life compared to the other prophets, all of whom had failed God in various ways despite their greatness.

"Who do you want to follow — Jesus or the prophets?" Sami asked.

"I want to follow Jesus," Noora answered.

During another visit Noora suddenly declared, "The message that you shared with me changed my life. I'm a new person." The changes in her life proved her words.

"Once we visited her and she was reading the Old Testament," Sami recalled. "After another week she was in the New Testament. She told us, 'This is my third time of reading the whole Bible.' After that we continued visiting her, encouraging her and discipling her. She said, 'Everything you tell me, I go and I share it with others. I tell the traditional Christians that worshipping saints is not good; you have to worship God. I'm sharing with the (Muslim) Syrians about how God changed my life.'"

Recently Noora returned to Syria for a visit with family, despite the dangers. When Sami called her to make sure she was OK, she reported, "I have a group of women gathered in my house from Muslim and Christian backgrounds and I'm teaching them."

"It's hard," Noora acknowledged, "but God is helping me."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Names have been changed. (BP)

Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*
Compiled by Kathleen Prude

50 Years Ago November 1962

50th Anniversary Celebration: South Highland Baptist Church of Bessemer celebrated its 50th anniversary Nov. 25 with a special service. Thanksgiving Day 1912 the church came into being with 12 charter members as Red Mountain Baptist Church. The name changed in 1916 to South Highland Baptist Church at the same time it became a part of Birmingham Association and the Southern Baptist Convention. (Later the church became a member of Bessemer Association.) From its charter membership of 12, the church has grown to a present membership of 938. Fifteen pastors have served the church during these 50 years. The present pastor, Jon W. Blouin, began his ministry in July 1961.

40 Years Ago November 1972

Recipient of Communication Award: Bill Bolen, religious news director of WBRC-TV, Birmingham, has received the 1972 Alabama Baptist Communications Award. A veteran of 25 years in the electronic communications media, Bolen was presented the award during the 150th session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting in Birmingham. Bolen was presented the award "for his contribution to Christianity as a result of the coverage given religious events."

30 Years Ago November 1982

Sunday School "Eagle Award": First Baptist Church,

Cullman, recently received the "Eagle Award" for Sunday School growth. Andy Anderson, growth consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board, presented the award to Rick Ellison, the church's minister of education, in recognition for providing quality Bible study programs for all ages. Rick Lance is pastor of First Baptist Church and Mike Cornett is Sunday School director.

20 Years Ago November 1992

Hurricane Relief Effort: When Hawaii Baptists needed help in the wake of Hurricane Iniki, they called on Alabama Baptists. Alabama responded immediately by sending Cliff McMahon, of Birmingham, and Emmette Jones, of Montgomery, to direct the field kitchen at the Wai Memorial Center in Kauai. Since that time seven other volunteers have assisted. The Alabama Baptist Convention purchased a second kitchen and shipped it to Kauai. The kitchens prepared 215,000 meals.

10 Years Ago November 2002

Godfrey Wins Presidency: Joe Godfrey, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, won the presidency of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in the first contested president's race since 1998. Also elected: First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, Pastor Henry Cox as first vice president, and First Baptist Church, Boaz, Pastor Roger Willmore as second vice president.

MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Ala., (near Montevallo) is prayerfully seeking a minister of music. Send resumes to: musicsearch@wiltonbaptist.com or P.O. Box 160, Wilton, AL 35187.

MUSIC MINISTER: Small, rural, traditional SBC church located south of Tuscaloosa seeking part-time music person. Send resumes to: Search Committee, Duncanville Baptist Church, 12103 Hwy. 82 East, Duncanville, AL 35456.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Hanceville FBC is seeking a part-time minister of music. Primary goal to lead church and choir utilizing blended music in such a way that they encounter God in worship. Additional questions will be discussed during the interview process. Please send your resume to: resume@hancevillefirstbaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP/YOUTH LEADER: Townley First Baptist. Worship primary concern, part-time. Send resumes to: T.F.B.C. Search Committee, 228 Alabama Avenue, Townley, AL 35587 or richarda2375@gmail.com.

YOUTH PASTOR: Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Ala., (near Montevallo) is prayerfully seeking a youth pastor. Send resumes to: youthsearch@wiltonbaptist.com or P.O. Box 160, Wilton, AL 35187.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER/DIRECTOR: To lead the youth ministry

program for Autaugaville Baptist Church. If interested, please send resume to: Dr. Garner Clark, 245 First Street, Prattville, AL 36067.

OTHER POSITIONS

KEYBOARD/PIANIST: Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Ala., (near Montevallo) is prayerfully seeking a keyboard/pianist. Send resumes to: pianosearch@wiltonbaptist.com or P.O. Box 160, Wilton, AL 35187.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Bessemer Baptist Association is prayerfully seeking God's man for our director of missions. We are looking for someone with ministry experience, strong leadership skills and a vision for the future of our association. We will be receiving resumes through Feb. 15, 2013. Resumes may be submitted to: Bessemer Baptist Association, 1331 Fairfax Avenue, Bessemer, AL 35020, or admin@bessemerbaptist.org.

ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONARY: Baldwin Baptist Association is seeking a new associational missionary. Please submit resumes to: Baldwin Baptist Association, P.O. Box 459, Silverhill, AL 36576, or email to: bbaoffice@gulfnet.com no later than Dec. 31.

BUSINESS

CHURCH SIGNS: Reliable Signs offers design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging to traditional. Statewide coverage. Christian-owned. Many church references

available. www.reliablesigns.com 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

AFFORDABLE BUSES: GRI Motors, Gadsden, has affordable buses to fit your needs. Call 256-442-7335. Let us help you find your next church bus. This week's special: 1991 International 25-passenger, \$3,995.

MOVING? LOCAL, STATEWIDE OR LONG DISTANCE: Coleman American/Allied Van Lines. Special rate and programs for Alabama Baptist ministers, staff and church members. Call Gary Washington at 205-540-7470.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

TRAVEL/VACATION

SMOKY MOUNTAIN LODGE: Can accommodate 56, indoor pool, 20-seat theatre, arcade, conference center, chapel for weddings/worship, views. Visit www.mooseshollowlodge.com. Moose Hollow Lodge. 301-238-5133.

LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

BELHAVEN
UNIVERSITY
Our Standard is Christ

BEYOND YOUR BEST



Excel beyond your highest goals. At Belhaven University, you will find yourself in a place where top-rated faculty and a nurturing environment converge to bring you to your best... then propel you beyond what you believe is achievable.

Nationally recognized academics. Vibrant campus life. Christ-centered worldview. The faith-affirming support to become more. Aim for excellence from God's perspective. Visit Belhaven University...your place to discover your purpose.

belhaven.edu

Schedule a personal visit to Belhaven University
or attend our next Discover Day.

Lifesaving food



BGR photo

Every day Mercy cooks dinner for herself and her brother, Clive, who is HIV positive, with food purchased through the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund.

Feeding program through World Hunger Fund provides food for HIV-positive orphan

The boy carefully climbs out of the desk and makes his way to the large chalkboard at the front of the classroom. After eyeing his teacher, the 10-year-old boy, Clive, picks up the piece of chalk and fills in the subtraction problem. It may seem small, but Clive's headmaster and teacher agree he is making remarkable improvements. Just a few months prior, this same boy was spending more time in the clinic than he was in the classroom.

Like many others in the Zimbabwe village of Zvavahera, Clive is HIV positive. But Clive's battle with HIV began long before he was diagnosed. Before the disease began to consume his own body — stunting his growth and making him smaller than other boys his age — it already was shaping his life. In 2007 AIDS took the lives of both Clive's mother and father, recasting the roles of his family and forcing his 16-year-old sister, Mercy, into the role of primary caregiver.

"When my parents were still alive, everything was better," Mercy said. "They used to assist us and play their role. When they passed away things became very difficult for us."

While other children their age come home from school to fully prepared meals, Clive and Mercy begin the race to complete chores before sunset. The balancing act of cleaning the dishes, sweeping the home, finding firewood, fetching water, searching for food, preparing the meal, finishing homework and other tasks often kept them out of school.

In 2011, Clive received the news he was HIV positive. Mercy said he really had no idea what it meant.

What began as a few missed days of school soon spiraled into months of illness. His decline in health made it impos-

sible to make the four-mile walk from home to school.

"Clive used to be in the clinic every week or every month," said Evans Thonolana, Zvavahera Clinic nurse.

On the rare occasions Clive could attend school, his teacher noted that the most he could do was sleep at his desk, unable to even copy notes from the chalkboard onto his paper. Clive's headmaster, Shadreck Makaganise, wondered if the boy would ever recover.

"We once went to see him," Makaganise said. "It was terrible, because we never thought he was going to survive."

Though Clive had medicine, he lacked the one simple thing needed to sustain his life — food. Nurse Thonolana said many of the symptoms Clive suffered were caused by his not having enough food for his medicine to be effective.

Finding food was nearly impossible for the two children. Extended family could not help, and drought made it difficult to grow crops. The combination forced Mercy and Clive into a desperate situation.

Mercy often skipped school in order to work a neighbor's gardens, in hopes of providing a little extra food for her brother.

"At times when he got sick, I used to cry because I didn't know what to do," Mercy said, her eyes filling with tears. "When he got sick he used to lose a lot of weight within a few days or so. ... I felt like I was hopeless. I could not improve the situation of my brother."

After a visit to the village of Zvavahera, and seeing many in situations like Clive and Mercy, Aaron Mutingwende, orphan care program director for the Baptist Union of Zimbabwe, decided something had to be done.

Mutingwende applied for a grant through Baptist Global Response to fund a feeding program in the area. Through that effort, hundreds of families impacted by HIV and AIDS have been provided with food.

The lifesaving food was provided by the World Hunger Fund.

Every month around 350 people come to the faded blue clinic in Zvavahera to receive their food. After weighing in and recording their progress, they fill their plastic sacks with rice, peanut butter, sugar, oil, soap and various goods handed out by volunteers from the local Baptist church. The recipients leave with more than a full bag of food. At every distribution, Nurse Thonolana educates the crowd on HIV care and prevention and Mutingwende encourages them to live the full and abundant life promised by Jesus.

'They are part of our family'

"We have to take care of the needy. We have to take care of the sick," Mutingwende said. "We can't allow people to think just because they are sick we no longer value them. ... They are part of our family, still part of society."

Mutingwende has seen the restoration in both individuals and the community as a result of this food distribution. From once-bedridden patients now walking to several HIV support groups developing, he said he could have never imagined this type of progress when the first distribution was made in January 2011.

"We have seen wonders being caused by the program," Mutingwende said.

World AIDS Day is Dec. 1. For resources to help your church observe World AIDS Day, visit www.baptistglobalresponse.com. (BGR)

World AIDS Day is Dec. 1.

WorldCrafts offers opportunity to meet artisans on fair-trade tour to India

WorldCrafts, the fair-trade division of Woman's Missionary Union that develops sustainable businesses among impoverished people around the world, will host a 12-day tour to visit seven WorldCrafts artisan groups in India, March 4–15, 2013.

"Tourists will be able to meet the skilled artisans and tour the artisans' work sites," said Andrea Mullins, WorldCrafts director and host of the tour. "They will also experience the breathtaking beauty of India as they visit four cities and some of the most famous and exotic places in the world. This is a first-class tour with a sense of mission."

The tour begins in Delhi to visit three artisan groups there: Noah's Ark, Noorjahan Enterprises and Sewa Ashram.

"WorldCrafts artisan group Noah's Ark is committed to fair trade and to changing lives of artisans through education and capacity building so that they may rise out of poverty," Mullins explained. "Noorja-

han Enterprises is bringing light to Muslim women of India by mobilizing natural gifts for sustainable development. These Muslim women represent one of the least educated, poorest segments of Indian society, yet they are changing their destiny piece by piece."

Quality care

"Sewa Ashram is a project of Delhi House Society that has been reaching the poorest of the poor in Delhi for more than 13 years," Mullins continued. "Their commitment is to provide quality health care, education, microenterprise and microfinance in the context of a loving and supportive community."

Tourists will leave Delhi and travel by rail to Agra for some sightseeing, including monuments such as the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, before arriving in Jaipur and visiting the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary; Hawa Mahal, a piece of Rajput architecture; and Jantar Mantar, an astronomical observatory.

While in Jaipur, tourists will visit with artisans at Ergon Handicrafts. According to Mullins, this artisan group seeks to empower women with job skills, income and confidence through employment in fair trade, with all products created from handmade cotton papers.

From there the group will travel to Kolkata, where they will spend the rest of the trip visiting sites of the former British capital of India and visiting with WorldCrafts artisan groups Freeset, Love Calcutta Arts and ConneXions.

"Freeset is a fair-trade business offering employment to women trapped in Kolkata's sex trade," Mullins shared. "Within a few square miles of Freeset's location in Sonagachi, more than 10,000 women stand in line selling their bodies to thousands of men daily. Freeset trains women with new skills for a new job and empowers them with life skills needed to appreciate freedom and

provide a brighter future for their families."

Love Calcutta Arts is also located in the red-light area of the city. This group brings freedom to young girls who would otherwise be at risk of abuse by training them to produce quality cards and bags. In addition to providing economic freedom, they also are able to build their sense of dignity and self-worth.

Providing opportunities

ConneXions provides opportunities for young women from the slums to receive training and job opportunities. In addition to being trained in tailoring and paper crafts, the women are taught basic English, business skills and values for life.

Space on the tour is limited. Learn more about the trip at WorldCrafts.org/fairtrade.asp. To shop the full line of WorldCrafts products and learn more about artisan groups, visit WorldCrafts.org. (WMU)

Church and state

Atheist group sues IRS for failure to monitor church politicking

A First Amendment watchdog group is suing the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for failing to challenge the tax-exempt status of churches whose pastors engage in partisan politicking from the pulpit.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), which advocates total separation of church and state, filed the lawsuit Nov. 14 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, where the 19,000-member organization is based.

The lawsuit claims that as many as 1,500 pastors engaged in "Pulpit Freedom Sunday" on Sunday, Oct. 7, when pastors endorsed one or more political candidates. That is a violation of IRS rules for nonprofit organizations.

'Pulpit Freedom Sunday'

IRS rules state that organizations classified as 501 (c) (3) nonprofits — a tax-exempt status most churches and other religious

institutions claim — cannot participate or intervene in "any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any political candidate."

Though the regulation has been in place since 1954, a federal court ruled in 2009 that the IRS no longer had the appropriate staff to investigate places of worship after a reorganization changed who in the agency had the authority to launch investigations.

IRS rules do allow for some nonpartisan activity by religious institutions, including organizing members to vote and speaking out on issues. But endorsing or supporting specific candidates could jeopardize their tax-exempt status.

But a recent Associated Press (AP) story reported that the IRS has not challenged any religious organizations on charges of electioneering in the past three years.

An IRS spokesperson told the AP that it was "holding any potential church audits in abeyance" until rules on election-

eering could be "finalized."

The lawsuit also challenges the legality of several full-page newspaper advertisements paid for by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, another 501 (c) (3), that exhorted voters to vote along "biblical principles." The ads ran after Graham met with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney and promised to do "all I can" to support his campaign.

FFRF has filed 27 complaints about church electioneering with the IRS this year, including:

► Roman Catholic Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay, Wis., who wrote an appeal on diocesan letterhead inserted in parish bulletins warning voters that they could "put their own soul in jeopardy" if they voted for a party or candidate that supports same-sex "marriage" or abortion rights.

► Roman Catholic Bishop

Daniel Jenky of Peoria, Ill., who criticized President Obama in a homily and then exhorted parishioners that "every practicing Catholic must vote and must vote their Catholic consciences."

'Non-negotiable'

► Roman Catholic Bishop Robert Morlino, who, in an article appearing in the local diocesan newspaper, wrote of "non-negotiable" political issues, and that "No Catholic may, in good conscience, vote for 'pro-choice' candidates (or) ... for candidates who promote same-sex 'marriage.'"

A similar complaint against the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for the electioneering of its members was filed by the Washington-based Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. (RNS)

The Freedom From Religion Foundation has filed 27 complaints about church electioneering with the IRS this year.

— Clarification —

In the "Standing on convictions" article in the Nov. 15 issue, Clayton Scott was incorrectly noted as being in charge of publicity for Citizens of Truth. He did serve on the publicity committee, but he was not the chairman.

VOICE YOUR OPINION

SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible

PRACTICE
is the key to safe teen driving.

- 1 50 hours of practice with an adult in various situations
- 2 Know the Alabama Graduated Driver License Law
- 3 Sign a Parent-Teen Agreement

Children's of Alabama®
ChildrensAL.org

This important safety message is being shared through our affiliation with The Alabama Safe Teen Driving Coalition and The AllState Foundation.

Give the gift that Connects. Reports. Inspires.

All year long!
Give *The Alabama Baptist*

Gift subscription to the print edition — \$15.75, or the online edition — \$11.25, each a savings of 25% off the regular individual rates.

Order a gift subscription for someone special

Call 1-800-803-5201, Ext. 118
or go to www.thealabamabaptist.info/gift

Want to know God?

By Pastor Jim Cooley
First Baptist Church, Haleyville

Choices. We make them every day. Some of them are minor: what to eat for dinner, what to wear in the morning, what to do with our spare time. Other choices are really important: what will you do for a living, who will you marry and spend a lifetime with. The choices we make help to determine who we are. They shape our values and guide our actions.

There is one choice that matters more than any other. Many years ago Jesus challenged a rabbi named Nicodemus to make that choice. He said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus tried hard to understand. How can you be born a second time?

Jesus explained it to him. Natural birth is never enough. The first time you are born you have arms and legs, eyes and ears, and all the things necessary to function in a material world.

What you lack is spiritual birth, a chance to know God and to be guided by His Spirit. Your sins aren't forgiven and you cannot know spiritual things. Everything spiritual requires a second birth. How can that happen?

Jesus explained it clearly in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Whosoever believes" — that is the choice. When Jesus said those words, He was teaching us two things. First anybody can know the Lord. All of us fit into the category "Whosoever." Never wonder if God has a place for you. The second thing is this — you have to personally believe. The only one who can make the choice for you is you. Belief is more than acknowledging Jesus; it is asking Him to be your Savior and Lord. It is critical, because Jesus continued by saying in verse 18, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

God wants you to be saved. He offers you the chance to be born again. All you have to do is choose. Will you believe in the only begotten Son of God?

“We’re not trying to start a movement here ourselves; we’re trying to go with what God is doing.”

Francis Chan
author/speaker

Making disciples

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Jonathan Whitt

Francis Chan (right) answers a question as part of a table discussion Nov. 9 with David Platt (left) and facilitated by Todd Proctor, lead pastor of ROCKHARBOR Church, Costa Mesa, Calif.

Gathering kicks off movement to ‘Multiply’ disciples

Francis Chan says he gets it. “Sharing your faith is hard. It’s very, very difficult. I don’t like offending people, and I hate being rejected,” he said. “I get it. I understand why we don’t do it.”

But Chan, bestselling author and founding pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, Calif., said we don’t understand the gravity of coming before God one day and telling Him we didn’t make a single disciple.

“To know that those words (Matt. 28:18–20) came from the mouth of Christ, and we can’t point to any disciples ... I think we grossly underestimate God,” he said. “God Almighty, God my Creator said to go make disciples, so I don’t want to sit here and make excuses.”

Chan and David Platt, senior pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, gave a raw challenge to personal discipleship during the Multiply gathering Nov. 9 at Brook Hills.

The three-hour event — which organizers estimate drew in more than 100,000 people at Brook Hills and via webcast — launched Multiply, a movement urging and equipping believers to make disciples.

It was followed by an identical event in San Francisco the next night. The simulcast will be a once-a-year event from now on.

“If we aren’t careful our Christianity will consist of doing good things in the church but not making disciples with our life,” Platt said. “Matthew 28:19 is not a comfortable call for Christians to come be baptized and sit in one place. It’s a costly command to go.”

A grassroots effort

Multiply isn’t a program or a method. Nor is it an attempt to begin a pastor-led movement, Platt and Chan both said.

It’s a grassroots effort to share life with people, showing each other how to follow Christ, pray, read the Bible and then share their faith with others as we did with them, Platt said.

“Look back at the moments when the gospel has advanced most rapidly, and you’ll see that it was when the whole church got a hold of each individual’s responsibility to be a disciple and make disciples,” Platt said. “We

are all to be involved in a grand global mission.”

Life as a student, stay-at-home mom, lawyer, doctor or salesperson — each is a vehicle for discipleship, he said. The emphasis isn’t on getting people to make decisions but on living life with them and showing them personally how to follow Christ.

“Whatever our calling, whatever our vocation is at the moment, the command is the same,” Platt said. “So we should all ask each day, ‘How can I leverage my job, my life for the sake of the spread of the gospel?’”

Chan said he doesn’t want to “technique this” or make it formulaic — he just wants believers to “pray for God to do something and show up and amaze us.”

Intentional discipleship

But some framework is helpful, he said. Materials available on the Multiply website can offer a basic guide for how to disciple someone intentionally in your everyday life, he said.

The Multiply Material is a 24-session discipleship experience that helps a believer show another person what it means to follow Jesus, read the Bible and live life as the Church.

The Multiply website calls it “a simple, practical, biblical, helpful, and personal tool for disciples of Jesus who want to make disciples of Jesus.”

From the very beginning, the definition of being a disciple meant to make other disciples, Platt said.

“No question, the thrust (of the Great Commission) is to go and make disciples,” he said. “He didn’t say, ‘Alright guys, pair up and disciple each other.’”

It wasn’t complicated back then, Chan said.

“They just started praying, and the Holy Spirit empowered them and they went out and started speaking with such boldness,” he said.

Chan said he just wishes “we as believers would pray more, would spend more time on our faces before God.”

“We’re not trying to start a movement here ourselves; we’re trying to go with what God is doing and how He’s moving,” Chan said. “We want to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples of all nations, just as Jesus commanded.”

For more information, visit multiplymovement.com.

How do **you** do it?

How do you become “disciples who make disciples who make disciples until the gospel spreads to all peoples?”

David Platt, senior pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, writes in the Multiply Material, “We have subtly and tragically taken this costly command of Christ to go, baptize and teach all nations and mutated it into a comfortable call for Christians to come, be baptized and listen in one location.”

According to the Multiply Material, here are a few ways to get the ball rolling on personal discipleship:

1. Get to know the Scriptures.

The Old Testament, the New Testament and the story of redemption that weaves its way through the entire Bible.

2. Teach what you learn.

“The emphasis of Multiply is to get you in the habit of passing on the knowledge you gain,” writes Francis Chan, bestselling author and founding pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, Calif.

3. Share life, not just information.

“True discipleship involves deep relationships,” Chan writes. “Jesus didn’t simply lead a weekly Bible study. He lived life with His disciples and taught through actions as well as words. While this requires a much deeper commitment, it is the only way to truly make disciples.”

The Multiply Material is available in book form as well as a free PDF download from multiplymovement.com. (TAB)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 2

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen

Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

EXPOSING A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Hosea 1:1-2; 2:2-5; 3:1-5

Something's Not Right Here (1:1-2)

The book of Hosea is the second longest of the minor prophets — only Zechariah is longer. Hosea could have been ministering for 50 years based on the number of kings who reigned over him. The first four kings (reigning between 793–686 BC) mentioned are kings of Judah, the Southern Kingdom. The last one mentioned, Jeroboam (reigned 793–753 BC), was a king of Israel, the Northern Kingdom.

It was in the Northern Kingdom where Hosea preached. From its inception the Northern Kingdom had turned from worshipping God. Jeroboam I had set up golden calves for the people to worship in Dan and Bethel so that his subjects would not go to Judah and worship in Jerusalem. The unfaithfulness of the Northern Kingdom is a main theme in the book of Hosea.

The book opens with the line, “The word of the Lord came to Hosea.” This is important because it shows that Hosea is a prophet of God and that his message is God’s message, not the message of a mere man. In the opening of the book God tells Hosea to marry an unfaithful wife. Some try to interpret this as Hosea’s wife became unfaithful after they were married, but the clear reading of the text is that God told Hosea to marry a woman who was going to be unfaithful. This is important because it represents God’s faithfulness to the Israelites even though He knew they would be unfaithful to Him.

Your Sins Will Come Out (2:2-5)

God is using the adulterous actions of Gomer as a way of speaking to Israel for her unfaithfulness. The words are addressed to Gomer’s children, but they are also meant for Israel. God is going to take action against Israel for her behavior. Time and time again Israel turned to foreign gods to satisfy their cravings, and because of these wayward ac-

tivities God was going to punish Israel. However, God’s discipline is always meant to bring His people back to Him. We see this continually throughout the Old Testament and even today. God disciplines us to bring us back to following Him, as He knows what is best for us. Hebrews 12:7 says, “Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?” And when we repent and turn back to God, He is always gracious and forgives us our sins (see 1 John 1:9 — “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”)

Redemption Carries a Price (3:1-5)

Hosea is told to take back his wife, though she is loved by someone else. Just as Gomer had turned from her husband to other men, so did Israel worship Baal and foreign gods, turning her back on God. This is spiritual adultery. But God continued to show love to Israel and entreated the Israelites to return to Him.

In order for Hosea to release Gomer, he had to make a payment. From whom she was redeemed, the text does not say. He may have had to pay off her debts or perhaps she had fallen into slavery. Regardless, the redemption cost Hosea.

Furthermore, Hosea commanded her to refrain from her wicked and wayward ways.

Today, just as in Hosea’s day, God desires that we turn to Him, and just as in the case of Hosea and Gomer, we need to be redeemed.

Additionally our redemption is costly. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to pay for our sins. Ephesians 1:7 lays this out clearly: “We have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

God loves us and desires that we turn to Him, but we need to come to Him on His terms, not our own. We need to repent of our sins and follow Christ.

Bible Studies for Life

By Michael Wilson

Director, Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence, Samford University

YAHWEH — OUR GOD

Exodus 6:2-8; 15:1-3, 11-13

Anticipating the birth of our first child, my wife and I used “baby name” books to help us think about a name. It took several weeks for us to choose one for a boy and one for a girl.

“What’s in a name?” is an important question most expectant parents ask. Choosing a name that somehow fits the character of one’s child is important.

Our lessons this month invite us to consider names used in Scripture to describe God and Jesus. We learn about their character by the names used to identify them.

Yahweh Makes Promises (6:2-8)

God’s name is first revealed in Scripture in the story of Moses and an extraordinary sight. Drawing near the bush that blazed but did not burn up, he must have been startled to hear the voice of the Lord calling to him.

No wonder Moses hid his face when he realized he was in God’s presence. “Yahweh” was the name identifying the Holy One Moses heard in the voice from the flames (Ex. 3:1-14).

“I am who I am.” The name Yahweh occurs more than 6,000 times in the Old Testament. Considered too holy to speak or write, Jewish scribes substituted the name Adonai or “Lord” in place of Yahweh. The Hebrew language does not use vowels and the exact pronunciation has been lost to history.

The name is based on the Hebrew verb “to be” and some translators use “I will be what I will be.” Others prefer “‘I Am’ is who I am,” which emphasizes God’s eternal nature. The meaning of the name continues to evoke wonder and a sense of mystery. This is appropriate: God is transcendent. Our capacity to understand the Holy One is limited.

God heard the groaning of the Israelites living in bondage. God remembered the covenant God made with the Hebrew peo-

ple. Yahweh would be true to the promise of deliverance from slavery to a good land, a land verdant and rich. When Moses asked God the question, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” (3:11), God’s answer, “[I am] will be with you,” indicates Yahweh’s personal involvement with Moses on the mission.

Yahweh Keeps Promises (15:1-3)

Caught between the sea and Pharaoh’s approaching army, the Hebrew people panicked. Their loss of faith led to intense fear (Ex. 14:10–13). We know this scenario happened again and again in the years that followed. Yet at this moment in their journey, once safely delivered from the Egyptians, the people were fully aware that God alone had redeemed them from their oppressors. Fear was exchanged for joy. Awareness that their future was open before them gave them hopeful anticipation. They again believed in Yahweh. Their future truly was as bright as the promises of God. What else could they do but sing a song of worship and praise to the God of their deliverance ... the God of promises kept?

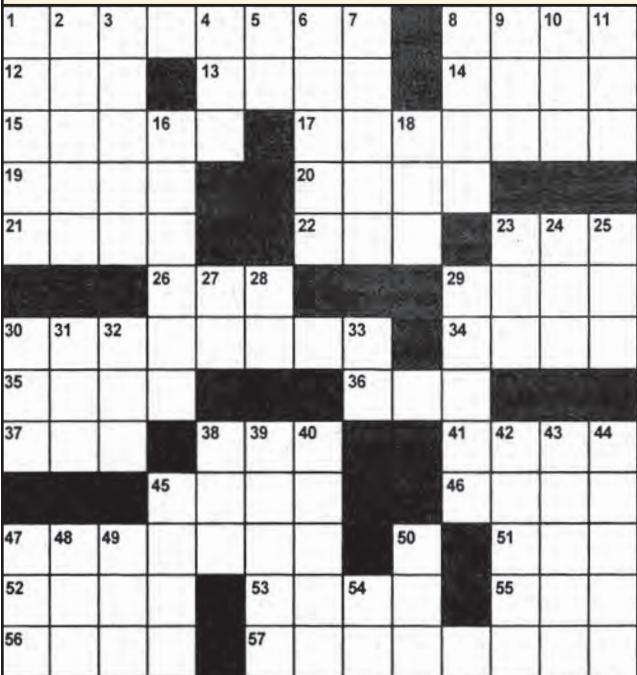
Yahweh Stands Alone (15:11-13)

“Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?” (vs. 11). The Hebrew people spent generations in Egyptian bondage. They were acquainted with the deities worshipped in Egyptian culture. It is likely many of the newly freed Hebrews regarded Yahweh as but another god among many gods. For these, the formation of their faith in Yahweh as the one true God was at an early stage. The later incident of making and worshipping the golden calf reinforces this understanding.

Yet after experiencing firsthand Yahweh acting in convincing, supernatural ways to bring about their deliverance, at that moment they considered Yahweh alone above all gods. The Hebrew people repeatedly failed to honor their covenant with God. Thankfully God’s “steadfast love” continued even during times of faithfulness and times of unfaithfulness.

Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across
1. Where Paul addressed the Athenians. (Acts 17:22)
8. Dull.
12. Short for Abraham.
13. The sons of ____; Arah, Haniel and Rezia. (1 Chron. 7:39)
14. Take thine ____ eat, drink and be merry. (Luke 12:19)
15. To them which were in _____. (1 Sam. 30:29)
17. Father of Isaac.
19. Belonging to a righteous king. (1 Kings 15:11)
20. And the ____ went and called the child's mother. (Ex. 2:8)
21. Nickname of Hephzibah.
22. Girl's name.
23. How dogs drink.
26. America.
29. Sons of Onam ... Shammai and _____. (1 Chron. 2:28)
30. Shalt not abhor an _____. (Deut. 23:7)
34. And ____ and Abimael
- and Sheba. (Gen. 10:28)
35. Uncommon.
36. Mouth.
37. School subject. (abbr.)
38. Rocky hill.
41. Cease.
45. Killer whale.
46. Let him eat at _____. (1 Cor. 11:34)
47. The vision of _____. (Obad. 1:1)
51. Retired. (abbr.)
52. Courageous man.
53. The Dalai ____.
55. He is of ____; ask him. (John 9:21)
56. For we have seen his ____ in the east. (Matt. 2:2)
57. And he conferred ... with ____ the priest. (1 Kings 1:7)
- Down
1. They could not drink the waters of _____. (Ex. 15:23)
2. Those that walk in pride he is able to _____. (Dan. 4:37)
3. Rejuvenated auto tire.
4. And the children of Aram; Uz and ____.
5. Negative prefix.
6. Andean beast of burden.
7. Jacob's father-in-law. (Gen. 28:1-2)
8. Though he were ____, yet shall he live. (John 11:25)
9. A cheer.
10. ____ took the silver. (1 Kings 15:18)
11. Bachelor of engineering of mines. (abbr.)
16. Suppose.
18. ____ Tin Tin.
23. Type of retriever. (abbr.)
24. Woman's name.
25. Buddy.
27. Yes. (Spanish)
28. ____ the name of Jesus every knee should bow. (Phil. 2:10)
29. An oak ... that pertained unto _____. (Judg. 6:11)
30. The mother of all living. (Gen. 3:20)
31. From ____ even to Beer-sheba. (Judg. 20:1)
32. Organization. (abbr.)
33. Hoshea ... sent messengers to ____ king of Egypt. (2 Kings 17:4)
38. Prefix meaning “three.”
39. Florida city.
40. By faith the harlot ____ perished not. (Heb. 11:31)
42. Jewish holy book.
43. I am Alpha and _____. (Rev. 1:8)
44. Then Simon ____ having a sword drew it. (John 18:10)
45. Smell.
47. ____ and ahs.
48. Wager.
49. Sons of Jether; Jephunneh and Pispah and _____. (1 Chron. 7:38)
50. Sheep's cry.
54. Musical note.



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Violence targets Christian areas in Syria

DAMASCUS, Syria — The targeting of Christians in war-torn Syria is increasing, according to Open Doors sources. “The car bomb in Jaramana was targeting the Christian and Druze community as a group, since the area has no political ties or buildings,” a local Christian source explained about the large bomb blast in the Damascus suburb Nov. 5. According to contacts in the neighborhood, 11 Christians and one Muslim were killed in the explosion. The blast left 69 people, all Christians, wounded. Twenty are in critical condition. “The attack took place during the final day of Eid al-Adha (Muslim holiday),” said Open Doors’ country coordinator for Syria. “Observers hoped the four-day holiday would mark a temporary ceasefire, but that hope proved to be false. I see this as another example that Christians are increasingly targeted.”

A believer from Damascus reports that recently a car bomb was found in a Christian neighborhood in the old part of the city. The car was parked next to two churches, a Maronite church and a Latin church. The two churches were warned and church officials instructed all their parishioners to go home in case the bomb exploded. Authorities were successful in disabling the bomb.

“The violent situation deeply hurts the entire Syrian population, the Christian community as well as other people groups,” said Open Doors country coordinator for Syria. “But about two or three weeks ago we observed an increase of violence that specifically is targeting Christians or Christian neighborhoods. Bombs now are placed in Christian areas where there is no strategic or military target at all. We are deeply concerned about our brothers and sisters and call all churches and all Christians to continue praying for this dangerous situation for Christians.”

Indonesian church resists order to relocate

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Bogor City, about 37 miles south of the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, is reported to be one of the world’s most densely populated areas. And, although not an Islamic state, Indonesia is the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation, with 86.1 percent of Indonesians being Muslim, according to the 2000 census.

In April 2010, Bogor’s Taman Yasmin Indonesia Christian Church (GKI Yasmin) was closed by order of the mayor and city government. That December the Indonesian Supreme Court affirmed the church’s constitutional right to freedom of worship; however the mayor refused to reopen the church. The Indonesian ombudsman’s office also urged the Bogor city administration to withdraw its 2011 decree annulling the church’s construction permit.

But now, in the latest twist in the long-running saga, Indonesia’s interior minister, along with the Bogor City authorities, decided at a meeting in September that the church would not reopen, but instead should relocate a little more than four miles away. In addition to the mayor and interior minister, representatives of the Muslim Communications Forum — a hardline religious group known for its stance against GKI Yasmin — attended the meeting.

GKI Yasmin spokesman Bona Sigalingging said if the church was evicted it would mean that the rule of law in Indonesia has collapsed. “There will be a separation and segregation based on racial intolerance. It means betraying Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, the motto of Indonesia, means ‘Unity in Diversity’).”

Case against ‘illegal’ religious literature continues

BAKU, Azerbaijan — Azerbaijani customs and secret police officers spent more than six hours searching a family minibus returning from Russia in late September, seizing religious literature they found hidden and confiscating the van and the driver’s passport, members of the Byakov family told Forum 18 News Service.

One copy of each book and magazine has been sent to the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations in Baku for “religious expert analysis.”

Azerbaijan bans the import of religious literature without State Committee permission. After five months, a car confiscated from other Baptists after religious literature was found in it has been returned, but a criminal case against the three for “illegal” religious literature distribution continues. Claiming that censorship has been abolished in Azerbaijan, Prosecutor Zahid Valiyev denied to Forum 18 that confiscating religious literature represents censorship.

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Hong Kong House

Marie Conyers McKay. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2011. 191 pp. (Paperback).

“Hong Kong House” is a collection of four novellas about different people who lived in the same house at different times. The house, once located at 169 Boundary Street, Hong Kong, was torn down in 1999, but its thick walls and unusual layout lingered in the author’s memory, prompting Marie McKay, then a resident of Hong Kong, to wonder what she would learn from this building if walls could talk. Using her intimate knowledge of Hong Kong and anecdotes she heard from people she met when she lived there, McKay produced these stories of the lives of families and individuals who might have inhabited the house.

The author has a gift for storytelling and an amazing eye for detail; her characters are realistic and the plots are engaging. It is easy to get caught up in the stories and forget they are fiction.

McKay now lives in Birmingham.

The Battle for America: Socialism and Christianity

William G. Lord. Bloomington, IN: Crossbooks, 2012. 248 pp. (Paperback).

At first glance this book appeared to be another diatribe against liberalism and the Democratic Party. Even for those of us who are concerned about the direction of our country, we sometimes want to put our hands over our ears and shout, “Enough! No more!” Do I really want to read another one?

As it turns out, “The Battle for America,” while certainly expressing opposition to the growing trend toward socialism in this country, is an interesting, scholarly work that presents a look at the history of socialism and weaves the narra-

tive into the landscape of today’s America, revealing “the impact of Marxist thought on the Christian Community.”

Wait — did I read that right? The Christian community? William Lord makes a strong case to support his contention that Christians have “replaced the first commandment — love of God — with the second commandment — love of neighbor.” In so doing, Lord insists, we have set our own evaluations and conclusions above those of a sovereign God and twisted the truth into a lie.

Lord is a former Marine who earned a seminary degree after his retirement from the aircraft industry.

Think Christianly: Looking at the Intersection of Faith and Culture

Jonathan Morrow. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011. 305 pp. (Paperback).

One of the concerns often espoused by church leaders and others is that the worldview of Christians is no different from that of the unchurched population. In this book Jonathan Morrow takes a close look at a number of aspects of worldview, pointing out how Christians should think.

How Christians should think? He’s trying to tell me how to think? Well, yes, but it’s not quite the way it may sound. Morrow lays out the case for the Christian worldview in fairly broad terms, never talking down to the reader. He gives sound reasons behind his contentions and backs them up with Scripture references and other sound sources as he contrasts the desired Christian worldview with others. His topics range from the Bible to evolution to sex to injustice to the environment to who Jesus is, and every page is a delight.

This is an equipping book; it is

full of practical advice, not only for right thinking for oneself, but also for engaging a lost, confused world. It is the kind of book you talk about to friends and pass along to them. I liked it so much, in fact, that I bought a second copy to share with others. It’s that good.

A Faith of Our Own: Following Jesus Beyond the Culture Wars

Jonathan Merritt. New York: Faith Words, 2012. 159 pp. (Paperback).

It shouldn’t be surprising that the son of former Southern Baptist Convention president James Merritt would be a Southern Baptist. Or that he has published over 300 articles in a wide range of outlets. It might surprise you that he has a mind of his own and doesn’t always see eye-to-eye with traditional thinking — or maybe not, since he was raised in the Baptist tradition of staunch independence.

In his second book Merritt takes on the bitter political partisanship in which many Christians have been involved since the late 1970s, arguing that the current generation wants more. He writes that members of his generation “believe we can call a truce to the culture wars while remaining faithful to Christ.” In fact, they believe faithfulness requires such a cease-fire.

There is a degree of Monday morning quarterbacking in the book; it is much easier to look at the past and see where the leadership went wrong than to chart a new course whose errors and omissions may not show up for decades. Merritt acknowledges this, noting that his generation will also make “grave mistakes” and be criticized by the next generation. That doesn’t stop Merritt from issuing a challenge to answer the call of Jesus “to be broken for Him. In the end, our beliefs, our love, our ‘values’ cannot be simply voted. They must be embodied.”

Passion roadtrippers make stop at UNA

The travels of Joe Brim and Todd Linder don’t qualify as your average roadtrip. They’ve been in the car for two months promoting the upcoming Passion conference in Atlanta, getting on “eye level” with college students across the United States.

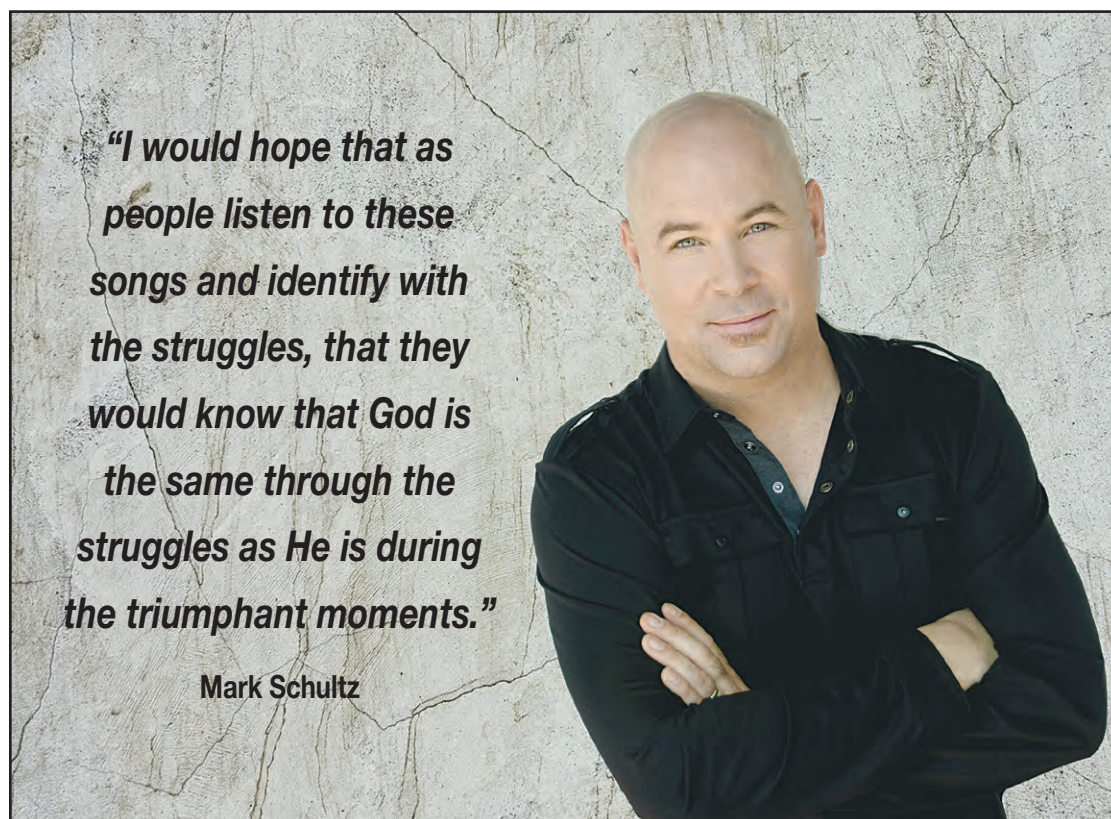
After visiting 60 campuses, their last stop was the University of North Alabama (UNA) in Florence. While hanging out with UNA students, Brim said, “This generation is going to be like exactly what Passion says, a force for good. A lot of people think that people are turning away ... but from what we’ve seen, the Lord’s really building up and strengthening the church, especially from campus to campus.”

Passion, a conference for 18- to 25-year-olds, aims to fill the Georgia Dome Jan. 1–4. To learn more about Passion, visit www.268generation.com. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Enon Baptist Church

ENON BAPTIST HONORS TEACHER
Enon Baptist Church, Morris, honors Marion McCowan for 53 years of service as a teacher. She has taught a variety of ages of Sunday School classes and about 20 years of adult classes.



Photos courtesy of Fair Trade Services

As the writer of songs such as 'Letters From War' and 'He's My Son,' Mark Schultz is known for powerful and poignant lyrics that point people straight to the gospel.

Faithfulness in the midst of struggles

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Schultz shares about God's unchanging love through songs

While performing concerts around the country, Dove Award-winning recording artist Mark Schultz often shares his testimony and personal story of adoption in hopes of raising awareness for orphan care and helping young families recognize this desperate need.

"It must have been so hard for my biological mother to give birth to a baby and say with tears in her eyes: 'There's so much I want to give you that I can't. I'm going to love you by giving you to someone who can take care of you,'" Schultz said.

"That's amazing to me, and every day I'm grateful for the parents who adopted me when I was 2 weeks old and helped me to become the person I am today."

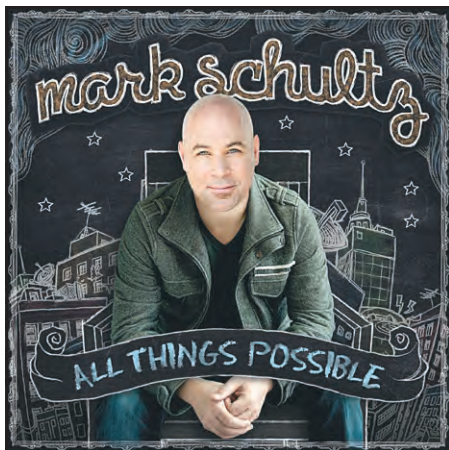
Desiring to help make a difference in the lives of orphans, Schultz went on a 3,500-mile bicycle ride across America in 2007, which raised more than \$250,000.

As the writer of songs such as "Letters From War" and "He's My Son," Schultz is known for powerful and poignant lyrics that point people straight to the gospel. His newest album, "All Things Possible," contains a collection of songs that celebrate God's faithfulness in the midst of struggles, trials and uncertainties.

"There's only so much we can do on our own strength," Schultz said.

"When I reached the end of my rope and asked God to take control, it seemed like He opened up endless possibilities. I want to show people what it means to place their hope and trust in the Lord. Our confidence is not in our situations; it is in the Lord.

"I would hope that as people listen to these songs and identify with the struggles, that they would know that God is the same through the struggles as He is during the triumphant moments. God's love and faithfulness never change."



Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Episcopal bishop says S.C. diocese cannot secede

NEW YORK — Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said Nov. 15 that the Diocese of South Carolina cannot unilaterally secede from the national church and urged conservatives to stay despite sharp disputes over theology and homosexuality.

"The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina continues to be a constituent part of The Episcopal Church even if a number of its leaders have departed," said Jefferts Schori, who heads the 1.9 million-member denomination.

Leaders in the Diocese of South Carolina announced Oct. 17 that disciplinary actions taken against their bishop, Mark Lawrence, triggered their disaffiliation from the Episcopal Church. On Sept. 18, the denomination's Disciplinary Board for Bishops found Lawrence guilty of abandoning the Episcopal Church and renouncing its rules.

The split escalated a long-running feud between the national church, which has approved gay bishops and same-sex "marriage," and South Carolina conservatives who oppose the moves.

Four dioceses — in California, Texas, Pennsylvania and Illinois — have split from the Episcopal Church since its consecration of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire in 2003. In each case Episcopal leaders rebuilt the diocese while insisting that church rules allow people to leave, but dioceses must take additional legal steps to separate.

Catholics urge Congress not to cut aid to poor

BALTIMORE — As Congress embarks on high-stakes budget negotiations to avoid the "fiscal cliff," leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops are warning elected officials not to target programs for the poor and instead raise taxes and reduce defense spending.

"In developing frameworks for future budgets, Congress should not rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons," Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, Calif., and Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, wrote in a Nov. 13 letter to the House and Senate.

Blaire and Pates chair the bishops' committees on domestic and international issues, and the letter asks that "poverty-focused international assistance programs" also be spared because they are a small slice of the budget pie, are effective and enjoy bipartisan support.

"In budget deficit efforts, there has always been a bipartisan consensus to exempt programs for the most vulnerable and instead to call for shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues, eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly," Blaire and Pates wrote.

Pornographic assignments increase in colleges

CINCINNATI — Schools such as New York University, Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and Wesleyan College in Connecticut feature assignments that are pornographic in nature.

What has been termed "porn curriculum" is steadily taking root in secular colleges and universities throughout the country. A handful of self-styled porn scholars believe in "immersing" their students in the porn culture by having them watch pornographic videos and exploring Internet sites for class homework. They argue that because graphic sexual imagery has become ubiquitous in society it is irresponsible to not teach young people how to deal with it.

Rick Schatz, CEO of pureHOPE, an organization dedicated to fighting sexual exploitation and brokenness in the United States, said exposing students to potentially addictive pornography was as dangerous and ill-advised as forcing students to drink alcohol.

"Instead of actually studying the legal, political and moral issues associated with porn, the vast majority of these courses are validating it and showing addictive pornography to students," he said. "There's absolutely no academic basis for that type of course."

Are you on
facebook

Become a fan of
The Alabama Baptist
newspaper.