

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Jan. 3, 2013
Vol. 178, No. 1

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

INSIDE



Medical missions during the past decade: IMB broadens influence by handing over control of hospitals

◆ Pages 4-8



Recent tragedy reminds public about importance of 'safety net' services

◆ Page 3



January Bible Study: Part 1 of 5 in a series on Holy Week

◆ Page 11

2012 YEAR IN REVIEW

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

It may not have felt like it, because a lot of people burned the candle at both ends in 2012, but in a variety of ways this past year was like one long, deep breath for Alabama Baptists. They picked up a lot of pieces from the year before, dodged several potential crises and made big plans for the future.

It was a building and rebuilding year.

For a number of Alabama Baptist churches, that rebuilding was literal, and the anniversary of the April 27, 2011, tornadoes found a number of Alabama Baptists still holding hammers.

There had been a lot of work to do, and still more to come. Forty-five Baptist churches and hundreds of homes were impacted by the 62 tornadoes that ripped through the state on the second deadliest day in U.S. history. But 2012 saw doors re-opening, homes restored and people who experienced the love of Christ through the ongoing help of Baptist disaster relief and construction teams.

"If I had been an unbeliever before all this happened, I would be a believer now," said Sid Nichols, director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association, in the commemorative issue of *The Alabama Baptist* printed in honor of the anniversary.

Calhoun Association was one of many that fed tornado survivors immediately after the storms then started a long-term effort to rebuild and repair damaged homes.

The aftermath of those storms saw unprecedented response by Alabama Baptists. And when 10 more torna-

does swept through Alabama in January 2012, state Baptists found they were even better prepared to respond.

The damage and loss of life was much smaller this time around, something Alabama Baptists gave thanks for as they helped victims. After 2011's tornadoes they felt they had dodged something that could've been a lot bigger deal.

This was a prevailing sentiment of 2012.

Story after story in *The Alabama Baptist* this past year noted that someone was "breathing a sigh of relief," not the least of which was the Great Commission Ministries FutureFocus Task Force.

Ministry and missions

After the task force report at the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting Nov. 13, messengers approved FutureFocus, a new "template for ministry and missions" in the state.

The plan is Alabama Baptists' response to the Great Commission Resurgence goals approved by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 2010, and it provides a financial model for taking care of state business while increasing giving to the SBC.

But the new money allotted to the SBC as part of FutureFocus will be available only if Alabama Baptist churches respond to the 1 percent challenge posed by Frank Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee. Alabama Baptist leaders propose that churches in the state do this by increasing their giving through the Cooperative Program (CP) by 0.25 percent each year for the next four years.

This comes at a time when the economy continues to struggle and churches wade through tough financial times, trimming budgets rather than increasing giving. The economy also was central to the intense race for U.S. president. This particular election year drew



Images from TAB files

(Clockwise from top) An Israeli soldier passes a burning car during Israel-Gaza conflict. Emmanuel Baptist nears completion of post-tornado rebuild. Alabama Baptists approve FutureFocus. Volunteers clean up after January tornadoes. SBC president Fred Luter Jr. addresses crowd.

Baptists into politics as much, if not more, than previous years and brought many to their knees in prayer in the hours and days leading up to the election that resulted in U.S. President Barack Obama being re-elected over Republican candidate Mitt Romney.

And while the election played front and center for much of the year, Alabama Baptists continued working through the assignments set out before them.

The Alabama Baptist State Board

of Missions (SBOM) continued working to develop and improve upon strategies to reach the state for Christ while also preparing to absorb a major loss in ministry and missions funding.

Beginning in 2013, the state will see the first installment of what will become hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding loss from the North American Mission Board (NAMB). NAMB has streamlined its purpose and cut away funding (See 'Murder,' page 12)

COMMENT

A Submissive Leader

There it was in black and white — the characteristics of a submissive leader. The term seemed an anomaly. It brought to mind cartoonish images of one sticking a finger in the air to determine which way the wind blew or one yelling to a crowd, “Wait for me. I’m your leader.”

The term was not a compliment. It described the type of pastor it took to be “successful” in a particular church — a well-known Baptist church — a few years ago. For example, the submissive leader had to “submit to the whims of reactionaries in the congregation.” The submissive pastor had to maintain the existing social order within the church and avoid controversial subjects in the pulpit. The submissive pastor had to “support the status quo in the community by remaining silent about issues.”

One could have a long and highly regarded tenure in this church if one obeyed the unwritten code of conduct. But violations of the code would be met with persistent and cruel responses from the power structure of the church.

The words were more than a hypothetical description. They were history.

Expendable pastors

Like throwaway products, pastors were expendable in this church. Those who courted the candidate to accept the church’s invitation to be pastor were the same ones who repudiated the leadership of any man with gall enough to stand against the values and traditions of the congregation. After all, there was always another would-be-pastor certain that he could succeed where others have failed.

Does that sound like any church you know? Does it sound like any pastor you know?

The book continued, “Some lay leaders and church members treated preachers like hired hands. They expected complete submission to their whims.” In 10 years this well-known church called four different men as pastor. To those outside the congregation, the church became known as a “meat grinder” that chewed up and spit out good men.

Yes, there were some members who tried to



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

support the pastor, who tried to do the right thing; but the power structure of the church was in the hands of aggressive members willing to use unrelenting intimidation to get their way. Passionate people usually overpower those seeking consensus.

Reading the account of this church it was obvious the members never wanted a pastor. They wanted a private chaplain to preside at events marking rites of passage — birth, death, baptisms, marriage, etc. The rest of the time the cleric was to be no more than an attractive display showing all who cared to see how nice the “owners” were.

I have known churches like this but never before had I picked up a book that described in public detail — including the name of the church and the names of some of the members — such a congregation. I felt sorry for the pastors caught in that “meat grinder.” Some of them I had known personally. And I felt sorry for pastors I know today who serve in similar situations.

By no means am I trying to place blame only on churches when discord occurs in a fellowship. The emergence of pastors who see themselves primarily as chief executive officers with an attitude of “my way or the highway” has done untold damage to churches in Alabama and elsewhere. Those who think themselves above accountability to anyone, including the church they serve, do not reflect the congregational polity of Baptists.

But failings by pastors do not excuse churches that want a “submissive leader” rather than a pastor. And the church described in the book developed its destructive patterns despite the work of good men with sterling records everywhere they served except that one congregation.

A pastor is the catalyst for all that happens in a congregation. That doesn’t mean he does

everything, but little will succeed without his blessing. A pastor is a change agent in a church. He stimulates growth in one’s relationship with the Lord. He clarifies the vision of the congregation and helps members choose the goals toward which they strive individually and as a congregation.

A pastor is the cheerleader as the church works toward its goals. He is the prophet bringing God’s Word to bear on one’s life and the life of the community. A pastor is the servant leader building up the fellowship by serving others.

The pastor must be free to preach the Bible. He must be free to confront sin. He must be free to obey God rather than men.

How hard that is when told either directly or by innuendo that to do something or say something could jeopardize one’s livelihood. What

pastor has not been warned against angering Brother So-and-So because he is the biggest giver or Sister What’s-Her-Name because she influences a lot of people in the church.

Even during the time I sat writing these words came a report of a Baptist minister told to resign or be fired because the head of a family clan in the rural church he served became angry with him. Just days before Christmas he was looking for a place to serve. What kind of security is that for a family?

Baptist pastors have no denominational hierarchy to protect them from abuse.

They have no union of peers

to fight for them when they are wronged. Courts stay out of ecclesiastical fights for the most part.

Pastors and their families live exposed to the congregations they serve. And they live knowing how tenuous that relationship can be.

Disagreement in churches

Like the church described in the book, every pastor knows stories of business meetings unexpectedly flooded with marginal members who show up only because word of some disagreement circulated on the gossip network.

No church needs a “submissive leader” as described in the book I read. Every church needs a pastor free to be the undershepherd of God to that congregation.

And every pastor needs to know that the church he serves wants him to be their pastor, not their “submissive leader.” Receiving such a message from you would be great encouragement to your pastor.

Join us in the Holy Land March 15–24
Only four spots left

Email holyland@thealabamabaptist.org
or call 1-800-803-5201, Ext. 103,
to reserve your spot.



"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**

Jennifer Davis Rash
Executive Editor

Grace Thornton
Assistant Editor

Neisha Fuson
Editorial Assistant
for Online Communications

Julie Payne
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions Coordinator

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

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

Scripture & mental health

By James L. Dill
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Recent tragedy reminds public about importance of 'safety net' services

As we enter a new year, the nation remains shocked and saddened by the horrific event that occurred in Newtown, Conn., in December. The school shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, as with the other mass killings, bring with them renewed focus on the prevalence of violence in our country, calls for the review of gun policies, and the inadequacy of access to appropriate mental health treatment and care for countless people who need it.

2013 also marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Community Mental Health Act of 1963, which was passed during the presidency of President John F. Kennedy. This legislation changed the direction of public mental health care away from large institutions toward a community-based system of outpatient, residential and support services.

The movement has brought successes and failures, but the challenge of preserving the infrastructure of the safety net of public mental health services in light of declining public resources will be formidable. Assuming that public safety isn't compromised, given the expectation of continuing funding reductions, is unrealistic.

As Christian believers we need to enter into the public debate that is now before us regarding public mental health policy and violence. As we do so, we need to enter such discussions fully informed about the potential consequences of the decisions we make. All too often, issues are addressed and decisions made only after horrific tragedies occur. Timely access to appropriate mental health services requires sufficient funding to assure that services are provided.

Tragedies like the one in Newtown remind us that we are all vulnerable when public safety net services are compromised. Whether or not mental illness was a factor in the Newtown shootings remains to be determined. Serious mental illness has been substantiated in some mass shootings. In others, it has not.

Serious mental illness is generally understood now to have a physiological basis to it and is beyond the scope of this paper and writer to address in clinical terms. The widespread prevalence of illicit drugs, breakups and breakdowns in family stability, excessive preoccupation with violence in movies, television and video games, among other societal changes, have contributed to serious emotional problems among ever increasing numbers of individuals.

The current community-based system of safety net services generally includes a continuum of outpatient therapy/counseling services, day treatment services, case management, crisis teams, assertive community treatment teams, group homes and access to inpatient hospital care. Such services are conceived as alternatives to more costly state hospital care.

While great pains are being taken to preserve the community safety net, mental health advocates and others claim the services are not enough. The existing community mental

health services have been sufficient to permit a substantial reduction in the size and number of costly state-operated mental hospitals, but that is only one of the anticipated objectives of the public sector safety net. The safety net has not been developed anywhere near the capacity required to meet the ever increasing mental health needs of a complex and increasingly vulnerable citizenry.

For a number of years, Alabama's General Fund Budget was subsidized through federal dollars. The economic downturn of 2008 brought with it a decline in state revenues, but Alabama's General Fund Budget didn't receive an immediate hit because of federal stimulus funds. Once the stimulus funding expired, the state's General Fund Budget could no longer meet the basic core functions of state government, i.e. Medicaid, public health, public safety, mental health, human resources and corrections.

Since 2009, the General Fund Budget appropriation to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) has been cut 28 percent, by approximately \$40 million. Such cuts are clearly taking their toll on the infrastructure of Alabama's public system of mental health care. These cuts have forced the DMH administrators to choose between cutting the safety net of care for some of Alabama's most vulnerable citizens and reducing the size of state mental hospitals even further. The obvious and correct choice was to do the latter and leave the array of community services that comprise the safety net intact, if possible.

The first round of cuts resulted in the number of state hospital beds being reduced to 900. Then Gov. Robert Bentley authorized the closure of Greil Hospital in Montgomery and Searcy Hospital in Mount Vernon near Mobile. The closure of Greil and Searcy was achieved by October 2012, producing significant savings but not quite enough in savings to totally eliminate the current deficit.

'Too many go untreated'

While more than 100,000 individuals seek treatment and care in community mental health centers annually, countless others are served within the primary health care system and in private psychiatric practices throughout the state. Regrettably, too many individuals with serious mental illness run afoul of the law and wind up in jails and prisons. Still too many others go untreated for various reasons and may be seen in shelters, on the streets and in underpasses.

The decisions facing mental health officials in Alabama are serious. Should the DMH close another state hospital? Should the community safety net system be reduced by eliminating certain services or further restricting who has access to publicly funded mental health services? If so, which services should be eliminated?

Which type of mental health diagnoses should be denied access to treatment? What would be the impact of restricting access to much-needed medications that contribute greatly to the stabilization of the symptoms of mental illness?

There are four state mental hospitals in operation in Alabama at this time. The Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility in Tuscaloosa is devoted exclusively to serving forensic patients. Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa and North Alabama Regional Hospital in Decatur serve patients who are committed through the various probate courts. The Harper Facility in Tuscaloosa serves geriatric patients.

It is probable that another hospital could be closed to help offset the deficit without compromising public safety, but there would remain a sizeable deficit projected for fiscal year 2014 that cannot be satisfied through further state hospital reductions beyond that.

The issue of hundreds of thousands of Alabama citizens with inadequate or no health care coverage also is a concern.

The Affordable Care Act offers additional funding through expanded Medicaid coverage and insurance exchanges. It appears that the State of Alabama will refuse the additional federal aid even though state-matching funds would be no more than 10 percent of the cost of the expanded care and nothing for the next three years.

The State of Alabama persistently ranks at or near the bottom in state funding for essential public services, and many times this is touted as a good thing. However, the relationship of public funding to the quality of life for all Alabamians is systematically ignored.

Without increases in state revenues, which are highly improbable, there remains little choice but to cut the safety net of community-based services. When the safety net infrastructure is compromised, so is public safety.

In Matthew 25 we find the Lord's commandment to take care of "the least of those among us." Some say caring for the vulnerable and needy among us is the work of the church and private charity alone and not appropriate for government. It is indeed the work of the church and private charity, but the collective needs of our most vulnerable populations cannot be met through the corporate church or charity alone.

In Romans 13 we find that government is given to us by God for "His purposes" and "our good." The argument that caring for the "least of those among us" is not an appropriate role for government simply lacks scriptural merit. The government's role in this matter is indispensable and within the purview of Scripture.

EDITOR'S NOTE — James L. Dill, Ed.D., is executive director of the Alabama Council of Community Mental Health Boards. ☞



**"When the safety
net infrastructure is
compromised, so is
public safety."**

**James L. Dill
AL Council of Community
Mental Health Boards**



Photo by William Haun

Michelle Wilkening examines a patient on clinic day at the Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu, Ghana. There are currently more than 300 health-qualified personnel serving overseas.

'Preach & heal'

IMB broadens influence by handing over control of hospitals

Medical missions is dead. The International Mission Board (IMB) no longer appoints medical personnel. Transitions of IMB-funded hospitals to local leadership are a failure.

These are just some of the myths circulating about Southern Baptist medical missions, said Charles Fielding, a physician with more than 15 years of experience with IMB.

"We have more medical workers on the field now than ever before," Fielding said. Today more than 300 health-qualified personnel serve overseas.

The myths originated nearly 30 years ago when the Foreign Mission Board (now IMB) began transitioning away from medical institutions, explained Rebekah Naylor, an emeritus missionary surgeon who served

for 35 years at Bangalore Baptist Hospital in India.

"The reasons for the transition were both financial and philosophical," Naylor said. "Financially institutions are expensive to maintain. Philosophically the leadership of the [IMB] believed that institutions were not the best and strongest way to accomplish evangelism and church planting."

Consequently, in the mid-1980s, IMB began handing over control of its more than 30 hospitals and medical and dental clinics to local partners. A 1997 IMB report — the last publication identifying international institutions with Baptist ties — lists 17 hospitals, 10 medical clinics, six dental clinics and one school in places such as Brazil, Indonesia, Japan and Yemen. Today IMB maintains only one — the Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu, Ghana.

Van Williams, an emeritus missionary physician and medical consultant for IMB, believes that the success of each transition was dependent primarily on the strength of the local partner.

"We've done it in different ways around the world," Williams said. "Sometimes it worked. Sometimes it didn't."

Now national conventions, private boards or government organizations operate about

half of the health care facilities included on the 1997 list, and in several instances IMB personnel continue to have some level of involvement. For the remainder, factors such as remote location, poor management or weak partnerships resulted in closure of the facilities. In each successful transition, however, "the hospital found a partner with the right strengths," Williams explained. He cited three examples of "phenomenal transitions" — Wallace Memorial Baptist Hospital in Pusan, South Korea, Bangalore Baptist Hospital and the Baptist Medical Center in Asunción, Paraguay.

The 'right partner'

For the hospital in Bangalore, the "right partner" was the Christian Medical College of Vellore, India.

The college had an excellent teaching program that allowed it to expand the services offered in Bangalore. Under a management agreement with the medical college, the Bangalore hospital offers medical care to more than 200,000 patients a year. It also boasts a nursing school and provides training in allied health, X-ray and medical records management. The college manages the hospital through a board of directors; IMB retains one seat on the board and funds the pastoral care department.

In Paraguay and South Korea, national Baptist conventions in each country established private boards consisting of directors from missions, business and medical backgrounds. Under these arrangements, medical facilities broadened their influence within their communities while maintaining a Christ-centered mission.

For example, prominently posted in every ward of Bangalore Baptist Hospital is the mission statement to give care in the Spirit of Christ and draw people to Him. It is a philosophy embraced by every leader, said Naylor, noting that the chaplain's office recorded 1,200 professions of faith in 2011. In other years the number has been as high as 4,000.

In Pusan, hospital leadership not only maintains a Christ-centered mission within the hospital walls but also extends its reach to some of the world's most restricted areas. Building on the legacy of the hospital's namesake — Bill Wallace, a Southern Baptist medical missionary to China — Korean medical personnel travel at least annually to other Asian countries, holding medical clinics in impoverished areas and sharing God's love.

Overall, Williams and Naylor agreed that the shift from institutions to local leadership was beneficial because it empowered local leaders to grow beyond what IMB could provide.

"When I first arrived in Bangalore, we were struggling to get patients. Now the hospital treats [as many as] 1,000 patients a day," Williams said. "When I arrived there were three missionary physicians, a nurse and six to eight Indian doctors. The hospital has just grown and grown and grown."

"It's the same with Paraguay," Williams continued, his eyes brightening. "To watch it go from a small hospital to a large medical complex with a heart center, a nursing school and the best emergency care in the city is truly enriching."

As institutional transitions continued to

"You are different from other doctors,' and we say, 'Yes. We are different because of the love of Jesus Christ.'"

**Van Williams, emeritus missionary physician
and medical consultant for International Mission Board**

play themselves out, IMB's commitment to medical missions never wavered, Naylor said. Instead the methodology shifted to incorporate health strategies into evangelism and church planting. "Preach and heal" — utilizing health strategies to share the gospel — was born.

Access to the world's hardest-to-reach areas is one of the primary benefits of this holistic approach to health care and gospel ministry, said Fielding, author of the book "Preach and Heal: A Biblical Model for Missions."

In 1985, Fielding was a 24-year-old college graduate in creative writing and psychology when God called him to go to places "where missionaries can't go."

"I'd never considered missions and never met a missionary," Fielding said. "But I realized it might be hard for missionaries to go to places like East Asia, Central Asia or the Middle East. That day God told me to go to medical school so I could serve Him in hard-to-reach places."

Ten years later, Fielding was serving as a physician in a remote area of Central Asia.

"My wife and I worked out of the back of a truck," Fielding recalled. During his first three years Fielding treated thousands of patients and saw 300 people come to faith in Jesus Christ.

"We had been told it would take 15 years for a person in this area to come to Christ," Fielding said. "We saw people come to faith in less than a week."

For Trey Alexander, a church-planting strategist who oversees a variety of human needs projects in Central Asia, community health projects allow health professionals to be the heart, hands and voice of Jesus in cultures where grace, forgiveness and healing are foreign concepts.

"Even if access wasn't an issue, the traditional method of sending a missionary to preach the gospel will fall on deaf ears if the people don't have a context for it," Alexander explained.

Instead, Christian health workers make the gospel real when they live out the principles of grace, love and forgiveness in their daily lives.

Positive transition

By giving up institutional control, IMB broadened its influence and multiplied its effectiveness, Fielding, Naylor and Williams agreed. The transition empowered medical institutions to expand their services and allowed IMB health care workers to reach into the world's most impoverished areas.

"The majority of the poor are in restricted-access places," Naylor said. "The majority of the lost are also in restricted-access areas. As we moved into public health and primary care, we gained sustained access to hundreds and hundreds of these people groups."

Over the past 15 years, Fielding cannot recall a single time when this holistic approach to gospel ministry has been unsuccessful in bringing people to faith in Jesus. The reason for the success is the "right to be heard" health care workers gain by taking time with their patients.

"Healing touches a felt need of the individual," Williams agreed. "When you sit with people and meet their felt needs, you gain their respect and trust ... They begin to say, 'You are different from other doctors,' and we say, 'Yes. We are different because of the love of Jesus Christ.'"

To view the "Preach and Heal" medical missions video, click here: <http://vimeo.com/52195600>.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Some names changed. (IMB)

Leaving a legacy

Dying Paraguay mission hospital transformed, given new life

Marlin Harris' mission was clear in 1988 when he arrived in Paraguay as a Southern Baptist representative: guide the transition of the mission hospital into a Paraguayan-run Baptist institution.

But during one of Harris' first meetings with the Paraguayan Baptist leaders, a convention leader stood and said, "There's an elephant in this room, and that is that you all are trying to give to us the Baptist hospital. And it's in such bad shape, we don't want it."

"Man," Harris realized, "we've got a long way to go here."

Harris, who had helped administer hospitals in Mississippi and Texas, assessed the hospital's needs. The accounting system needed to be completely reworked for financial soundness. But more importantly, the administration needed to be reorganized to involve the Paraguayans more in management.

Harris identified key leaders with the conceptual ability and the maturity to handle more responsibility, but realized he needed one more person in place.

A contact put Harris in touch with an Argentine pastor's son named Ernesto Simari, a solid businessman who wanted to work in ministry. Harris hired Simari as his assistant.

"It was an adventure of faith, knowing that I was answering a call from God," Simari said. "We started working under a participatory leadership, and we defined the vision and the mission of the hospital, which gave us a clear view of where we needed to go."

Shortly after Simari's arrival, Harris and his family returned to the United States to care for Harris' ill mother. The hospital was left in the care of Simari and the new Paraguayan management. It was almost a year before Harris was able to return.

"I remember when I walked [back] into the hospital," Harris said. "I could just feel things were different. ... They were able to move forward."

The struggling mission hospital had transformed into the Baptist Medical Center of Paraguay, a full medical center with a reputation for excellent medical care and fair business dealings. It was this credibility that inspired a group of local medical professionals from non-evangelical institutions to approach Harris with an idea.

"They said, 'We want to start a heart institute, and we don't feel like any other institution in the city could pull it off except this institution,'" Harris recalled.

Harris and Simari had not considered taking the medical center in such a specialized direction, but they couldn't ignore the significance of the request.

To generate the revenue needed for financial stability, the medical center already was building 20 private patient rooms. Creating a heart institute meant taking on an additional million-dollar project.

"It was risky at the time," Harris said. "But it was just a decision of faith, and we felt like God wanted us to do it."

A year after its creation, the heart institute performed Paraguay's first successful heart transplant in 1996. The history-making procedure brought unprecedented publicity to the medical center — and also led the patient to Christ.

Almost everyone on the hospital staff has a story to share about patients meeting Jesus at the medical center.

Chaplains comprise a branch of the medical center's administrative structure. Six full-time chaplains and four medical chaplains maintain a 24-hour presence at the hospital to provide counseling for patients' families and ensure that every patient has the opportunity to hear the gospel.

"About 16,000 patients a month walk through the hospital," Harris said. "That's just a tremendous opportunity for evangelism and to share the gospel. And usually those people are in a very vulnerable moment where they really need to hear something from the Lord."

Spiritual training

The medical center ensures this legacy of medical ministry will continue through the Baptist Medical Center University. At a campus adjacent to the hospital, more than 900 students earn degrees in nursing, occupational therapy, family medicine, mental health, clinical pastoral education, university teaching and hospital administration. But an added feature of the university is the spiritual training it provides all the students.

"I think that the biggest legacy I can leave is the forming of men and women that are competent, compassionate and committed to the institution," said Simari, now the general

director of the medical center. "[They] allow us to undertake great things for God."

Harris left the field in late 1998 and now teaches Spanish at an Alabama high school. Upon retiring he set up the Paraguay Baptist Medical Center Foundation, which has raised close to \$800,000 to support the hospital and fund university scholarships. The hospital is financially sound, but the foundation keeps Harris connected to the institution where he invested two decades of his life.

The medical center has not forgotten him.

Odenir Figueiredo, the university chaplain, said, "For the Baptist hospital, the transition has been gradual and effective to such a level that today we can see a self-sufficient hospital, thanks to that gradual transition of forming professionals. It was done in the right length of time."

In similar cases in other countries, transitions rarely have been successful. But in the case of the Baptist Medical Center of Paraguay, the transition not only worked but also brought unexpected benefits.

The medical center is now thriving and furthering the gospel through the medical care it provides.

"Since I left in '98, the leadership has been really all Paraguayan Baptists," Harris said. "It has given the nationals a greater sense of identity — that it's their work. They're not dependent on American missionaries anymore."

In 2011, Harris returned to Paraguay to celebrate the nation's bicentennial with his friends at the medical center. It was a time for everyone who had been through the transition to reflect on the work God had done there — and continues to do today.

"The Baptist Medical Center exists so that we can reach people and tell them about Jesus," Figueiredo said. "And I think we have achieved this basic principle left by the missionaries." (BP)



IMB photo

A lab technician examines a specimen under a microscope in the laboratory at the Baptist Medical Center in Asunción, Paraguay.

Those left behind

Surgeons react to hospital transitions

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Oftentimes with heartbreaks you can look back and see that, in the end, you came out stronger. Better. More able to live well, and to sacrifice well.

But that doesn't change the fact that, at the moment of the break, the pain is often hard to bear and hard to understand.

Rebekah Naylor said that's exactly what happened when she first heard the International Mission Board (IMB) was going to sell Bangalore Baptist Hospital (BBH) in India. She invested her life there as a missionary surgeon. She was with the hospital nearly from its inception. She saw its wards filled with patients. And then she heard the IMB was pulling out.

"I was told to sell the hospital. It was out of the blue," said Naylor, an emeritus missionary surgeon who served a total of 35 years at the hospital. "At that point in the process, I would certainly admit that I as well as my national colleagues felt abandoned by the IMB."

Her national colleagues were more able than she was to vocalize openly their concerns about future finances, how the hospital would go on and how the patients would be served. She was the only missionary still at BBH, and her role at that point was to make her colleagues feel good about the transition.

"As the leader, I was leading them to look positively on the situation and the future," Naylor said. "But honestly we didn't know if we could make it or not."

She was under "tremendous pressure."

Naylor spent a couple of years "going all over India" trying to sell the hospital, but buyers were skeptical, she said. Why would a mission board sell a hospital if the institution wasn't in trouble?

"They couldn't understand the change in philosophy (away from owning medical institutions)," Naylor said.

And even if she did find someone willing to take the risk, they couldn't afford it. To transfer the deed, the government required a hefty tax — 14 percent of the hospital's market value.

"No buyer could afford to pay the tax, and neither could the IMB," Naylor said.

So after two years of her hunting a buyer, the IMB decided not to sell it after

all, she said. They sought a management partnership with a local medical college instead.

"What the IMB brought to the table was a viable, excellent institution where the spiritual priorities were firmly in place — to draw people to Jesus Christ," Naylor said. The medical college also brought a variety of offerings, she said. (See story, page 4.)

"I knew at the time and certainly in retrospect that it was very God-ordained and arranged," she said. It had the potential to not work out amicably, "but it has been a wonderful relationship," she said. "It is truly a success story."

Where the IMB-run facility had 100 beds, the college-run hospital has 300. New programs abound. And when Naylor gathers with hospital leaders and staff this month to mark the hospital's 40th anniversary, it will be a joyous celebration, she said.

"The result of the transition is that the hospital has been and is today an institution that is probably much bigger and much more far reaching in its ef-

fectiveness than it ever would've been or could've been had it stayed with the IMB," Naylor said. "Of course at the time we didn't know that, but in hindsight it's very evident that God used all of this in a remarkable way."

For general surgeon Don Meier, the story had a not-so-happy ending, he said.

When he moved his family to Nigeria in 1982, the IMB had already turned the hospital there over to Nigeria's Baptist convention. "We had a nicely functioning hospital at the beginning, but the hospital has almost no patients now," Meier said. "From a numbers standpoint, it has gone way down since the expatriates left."

He moved back to the U.S. in 1999 knowing that when he did, it would leave a hole, he said. "IMB didn't take away the missionaries there, but they let us know they would not replace us."

Meier said part of his role was to train Nigerian general practitioners to build village hospitals and "practice high-quality medicine in Jesus' name."

"As long as we were there and working with (staff doctors), things were really good," he said. "We look back with fond memories ... but we felt we were disenfranchised by our sending agency." ❧

"I was leading [national colleagues] to look positively on the situation and the future. But honestly we didn't know if we could make it or not."

**Rebekah Naylor
emeritus missionary surgeon**



BP photo

IMB representative Vicki Grossmann, a family nurse practitioner who has served in Guatemala for 25 years, focuses on health care for indigenous women and children.

In need 'simple

Women's health urgent concern to IMB

Women who have no concept of what a germ is — how do you teach them about good health practices?

"If you don't have an education where you understand that, for instance, bacteria and viruses and parasites that you cannot see are causing you to be ill ... then it's a big leap of faith for them to believe that," said Vicki Grossmann, a primary care medical practitioner in Guatemala.

This is but one challenge Southern Baptist health care workers face as they minister to women overseas.

Another hurdle? Poverty — extreme poverty.

Margaret Bricker, who works in a medical clinic in Southeast Asia and hosts mobile clinics in her community, continues to be struck by the physical toll poverty takes even after working 16 years in her Third World setting.

She met a 37-year-old woman from the slums, for example, who looked 50. A life full of struggle — including keeping her children off the streets and finding enough money each day to survive — had caused debilitating worry. She slept only three hours a night.

"Even if there is someone with a competent medical provider in the area, if [these poor women] don't really have the resources, they really can't access them," Bricker said.

Across the globe millions of women are

suffering because they lack access to or knowledge of good health care. In addition to poverty, the major causes are lack of education and inequality in society.

"Globally, in any society, women have more health issues and needs than men," said Sheryl Stack, a health care worker in North Africa and the Middle East. "In societies where health care is both physically and economically challenging to access, women are particularly impacted and in need of advocacy."

Serious conditions

Conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth and gynecology are typical, but other issues also are prevalent — cardiovascular disease, cancer, physical and sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, lack of proper nutrition and respiratory disease. Even treatable conditions like diarrhea, anemia, high blood pressure and diabetes become serious health concerns for these women.

"Going door to door is a great thing, handing out Bibles is a great thing ... but it's much more effective to build a relationship and to meet people's perceived needs," Grossman said. "You might say, 'Well, God is interested in them going to heaven' — yes, He is interested in them knowing Him as Savior. Yes, I agree, but they don't know that; they don't see that. They don't feel that as a need — but they feel a need that they're hungry or that they're sick."

By meeting their human needs, she continued, people are more open to hearing



BP photo

A Southeast Asian woman smiles at her new baby. Around the world, however, many mothers are not able to receive quality care during pregnancy and childbirth.

of intervention



BP photo

Margaret Bricker, a health care provider in Southeast Asia, uses mobile clinics as a way to help people in rural communities who have little or no access to health care. Many women, especially the poor, do not have enough power — socially or financially — to receive needed care.

workers, vital for health of children, family too

about how God can meet their spiritual needs.

Southern Baptist workers underscore the value of education in women's health, yet in many societies families can afford for only one or two children to attend school — and sons are sent first.

"Just a simple intervention like letting girls go to school and learn to read has huge implications for their future families, health and kids," said Levi Gladstone, a physician in Central Asia.

Bricker, too, sees the ill effects of poor education in her Southeast Asian community. Many times people "absolutely have no real idea about how the body functions and why nutrition is important."

A common belief among women in her area is that water makes them fat, so they drink little more than a thimbleful a day. They suffer from headaches and fatigue, not realizing they are simply dehydrated. "[Women's health] shapes the health of the

whole family — and for the next generation — because what they know and understand is what they pass off to their children," Bricker said.

Unfortunately women in many cultures simply lack the right to make their own health decisions.

"If men keep most of the finances [and] are the decision-makers, then many of the women are not independent to make the decision or have the access to the finances," Stack said of what she sees in North Africa and the Middle East.

Grossmann also observes gender inequality in Guatemala. She encountered a woman suffering from a gynecological issue, for example, who did not work and make her own money, thus her husband was unwilling to give her funds for medical help.

"That's the concept of marriage — you marry a woman to have children and cook for you," Grossmann said. "[Men] often don't see that cooking, caring for the house,

buying food, taking care of children is valuable. You don't get paid for domestic work, so it's not as valuable as the man's outside job that pays."

Gender inequality can even translate into food distribution — in many Third World countries men get the first portion or the meat and women get whatever is left.

'Second [class]'

Josie Gabdon, a nurse in South Asia, said, "Women are thought of as second [class], sometimes as a possession, and not given the same opportunities as men."

Southern Baptists have a long history of meeting both physical and spiritual needs around the globe. The first overseas medical missionary was appointed in 1846, just one year after the Southern Baptist Convention was formed. The first female doctor was appointed in 1881 followed by the first female nurse in 1901, both of whom served in China.

In the years following, the International Mission Board (IMB) established overseas hospitals in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. Since the 1980s these institutions have been handed over to local Baptist conventions, other organizations or governments to operate — but Southern Baptists still have missionary personnel present in a few.

IMB's medical missions focus has shifted to outpatient clinics, basic health care and education, community health training and disaster response. Today, approximately

300 health care-qualified personnel serve overseas.

Jenny Byrd serves in one of the countries of North Africa and the Middle East where people often have "no food, no shelter and no hope. ... Life is focused on just surviving day to day — and hoping there is food to eat and water to drink."

"By working in what is my passion — medicine — the gospel and telling all my patients about Him naturally flows and each of them hears truth when they come [to my clinic]," Byrd said.

In 2009, Byrd gave hospice care to May, a woman dying of breast cancer. For four months she eased the woman's physical pain, but Byrd also shared the hope for eternal life. Two months before her death, May accepted Christ.

"I did not know what to do for May — I had no cures or answers ... all I had was our heavenly Father, and ultimately that was all she needed," Byrd said.

For these Southern Baptist workers, health and the gospel go hand in hand — and the Great Physician is the best doctor.

"We really see this as the most important thing to do — which is share the gospel with people," Bricker said of those she serves in Southeast Asia. "And we don't want to just heal their physical bodies now, and then have them die and go into an eternity without God."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons. (BP)

"By working in what is my passion — medicine — the gospel and telling all my patients about Him naturally flows and each of them hears truth when they come [to my clinic]."

Jenny Byrd, Southern Baptist health care worker

The mother of an 18-month-old waits with despondence for a doctor as her son sleeps in a Central Asian hospital ward. Severely underweight, the child was admitted for malnutrition, pneumonia and an infection in his leg.

Saving lives



IMB photo

IMB medical workers gain access, credibility among unreached

Medical strategies are a key piece of engaging unengaged, unreached people groups, said Trey Alexander, a church-planting strategist in Central Asia. While formal requests for medical personnel are limited, International Mission Board (IMB) needs doctors, dentists, nurses and public health practitioners willing to “lay down even their specialty ... to bring Jesus into a place where He’s never been known before,” Alexander said.

“We find unusual specialists among our people,” agreed Van Williams, an emeritus missionary physician and IMB medical consultant.

“You can use any medical skill if you are willing to use it a little differently than you were trained to use it.”

Doug Page is one example. Page is a thoracic surgeon serving high in the mountains of a remote Central Asian city. The 60-plus bed facility where Page works is dirty and poorly equipped, but it is the largest of three hospitals in the area and provides the best health care available to the 350,000 residents of the province.

“Doug does very little thoracic surgery and more general surgery,” Alexander said. “He doesn’t have most of his tools, but he is able to save lives and make a difference spiritually.”

For health professionals and medical or dental students who want to make a difference among the unreached, Williams gave the following advice:

- ▶ Contact IMB to determine the types of requests available for medical personnel. While many requests list “church planter” or “evangelist” as primary, some request a person with “health-related skills” who can build relationships.
- ▶ Develop a strong back-

ground in primary health or be willing to use specialties, such as dentistry, cardiac care, surgery or orthopedics, to educate and train health care workers in other countries.

Medical volunteer

- ▶ Serve as a medical volunteer on an international missions team. Help nonmedical Christian workers gain access and credibility among unengaged, unreached people groups.

- ▶ Network with other international Christian health care workers by attending IMB-sponsored medical conferences and events sponsored by partnering organi-

zations, such as the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship (BMDF) and Baptist Global Response (BGR). BMDF is a professional organization of Christian health care workers offering short-term projects, international partnerships and disaster relief training. BGR, a global Southern Baptist relief and development organization, connects Southern Baptists with poor, suffering and needy people around the world by mobilizing influence, prayer and human and financial resources.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons. (IMB)

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) is considering making some changes to the reverse mortgage. At our annual NRM-LA (National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association) Conference they told us to expect these changes in the next few months. The possible changes being discussed address the responsibilities of homeowners who do a reverse mortgage. They are: pay for homeowners insurance, pay property taxes (unless exempt) and maintain the home.

Since a homeowner would default on their reverse mortgage if they don’t comply with any of these three responsibilities, FHA is talking about ways to reduce the possibility of a default. Some ideas involve implementing credit scores and possibly increasing the

MIP (Mortgage Insurance Premium). If they increase MIP it could lower the percentage you receive. If they consider credit scores, some will not qualify.

At present, credit scores have nothing to do with getting a reverse mortgage and if you’re concerned about your credit score or if you want to take advantage of current MIP rates, you may want to apply now before any changes are made. You may be better off.



Jimmy Dixon

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible Study director and an active deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure, quote or DVD, call 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgowinking.com.

— Paid Advertising —



www.AlabamaCounselingandConsulting.com

Alabama Counseling & Consulting Center

Alabama Counseling and Consulting Center

A new Christian Counseling practice, specializing in marriage, family, pre-marital, depression, anxiety, and parent-child relationship counseling as well as life, career transition and career coaching. Our core values are rooted in Christian Faith and in the word of God.

Mark Beaird, M.A., LPC, MLAP
700 Airport Dr, Suite D, Huntsville AL • 256.882.7881

Need to lose 5 lbs., 100 lbs. or learn how to eat healthier?

NO shots. NO surgery. NO pills. NO potions. NO gimmicks. NO gadgets.

Learn how to feed your temple! It is possible to get all your macronutrients (proteins, carbs and fat); eating real foods (steak, green beans, corn, potatoes, oatmeal, chicken, fruit, pintos, okra, pork chops, squash, fish ...) and remove fat at the same time! Fat so easily besets us!

HOW DO YOU GET THIS LIFE CHANGING INFO?

- Attend Body 4 Believer classes
- Order the instruction manual
- 8-week menu guide and cookbook
- Class series on DVD and video study guide

888-977-3233 • 256-845-0013

www.body4believer.com • body4believers@bellsouth.net



LANDERS MCLARTY

DODGE CHRYSLER JEEP RAM

DODGE

CHRYSLER

Jeep



EXCLUSIVE OFFER for the Alabama Baptist Community



2013 Dodge Dart



2013 Fiat 500



2013 Subaru Outback

**Best Price.
Best Selection.
You Pay What We Pay.**

Call Frank Williams

General Manager 256-541-1477 • frank.williams@landerscorp.com

South University • Huntsville

LANDERSMCLARTYDCJ.COM



Across Alabama's Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► The former **Ruhamah Church, Birmingham**, will hold a reunion Jan. 19, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. in its old building's fellowship hall. The event is hosted by Greater Emmanuel Temple Holiness Church, who now occupies the building. Attendees are encouraged to bring any old photographs, scrapbooks and mementos from the years at the church. Also bring snacks and drinks if able. Greater Emmanuel will provide coffee. For more information, call Su-

sanne Shepherd at 205-822-4728.

CHILTON

► **Daniel Wilson** is the new pastor of **West End Church, Clanton**. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Ky., a master of theology degree and master of divinity degree from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga., and a doctoral degree from Covington Seminary in Rossville, Ga. He previously served at Dry Ridge Church, Dry Ridge, Ky.; the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions; and Raleigh Avenue Church, Homewood. He and his wife, Erin, have one child.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Shane Dye** is the new pastor of **Daviston Church**. He and his wife, April, have three children.

OTHER

► **Bart McNeil** has resigned as the associate minister and resident pastoral intern of **First Church, Mobile**, to serve as pas-

tor of **Azalea Church**, Norfolk, Va. The church will hold a reception in his honor Jan. 6 after the worship service. He and his wife, Stacey, have two children.

Please submit news items for "Across Alabama's Associations" at least three weeks prior to the event.

Jasper church vandalized

Two Walker County churches — one of them a Baptist church — were vandalized on the night of Dec. 17.

The vandals broke into Antioch Baptist Church, Jasper, and did damage to the fellowship hall and some of the Sunday School classrooms. WSFA reported the church was burglarized as well.

Jasper Alliance Church took a harder hit. A fire was set in the church that damaged its facilities. Also, the vandals stole a few items not identified publicly.

WSFA reported at press time that Matthew Dalton Elliott and Michael Ray Wilson were

taken into custody as suspects for both incidents. Both are facing charges of burglary, theft of property, criminal mischief and arson. (TAB)

— Correction —

In "Jackson Way honors member for perfect attendance" in the Dec. 6 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, Earl Thompson was recognized for 62 years of perfect attendance of Sunday School at Jackson Way Baptist Church, Huntsville. The correct number of years is 67.

Choices That Can Change Your Life

Dr. Richard Couey, renowned Professor Emeritus of Health Sciences at Baylor University and author of over 30 books, will share how lifestyle, diet, exercise, and faith influences health. Please join us, for this **FREE** program for all ages, in the Chapel for this special Health & Wellness Ministry event.

Dawson Family Of Faith
Saturday, January 12 • 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

For more information, please visit our website at www.dawsonchurch.org



Dawson Memorial Baptist Church
1114 Oxmoor Road • Birmingham, AL 35209
(205) 871-7324 • Prayer Line: (205) 795-PRAY

MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: For a small congregation in rural area of Birmingham, Ala. Send resumé to: Katherwood Baptist Church, 600 Roanoke Street, Birmingham, AL 35224, or email to: romajacks@att.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Ivalee Baptist Church in Etowah County, Ala., (near Gadsden) is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 2020 Gallant Road, Attalla, AL 35954.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF MUSIC & WORSHIP: Bon Air Baptist Church, a large, suburban, multi-site church in Richmond, Va., seeks experienced associate pastor of music and worship. Please send resumé to: worshipleader@bonairbaptist.org.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: CrossRoads Baptist Church at Warrior, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of music. We enjoy a blended mix of worship music. Fax resumé to 205-647-3881 or email it to church at crossroadsbaptistchurch35180@gmail.com, ATTN: Personnel Committee.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: West Highland Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational music minister. Information may be obtained at WHBC@Knology.net or by sending resumé to: WHBC, P.O. Box 481, Athens, AL 35612.

PART-TIME MUSIC/YOUTH DIRECTOR: Rock Mountain Lakes Baptist Church, a growing church in western Jefferson County, is seeking to fill a

part-time music/youth director position. Check us out at rmlbc.org. If interested, mail resumé to: RMLBC, c/o Joni Holt, P.O. Box 1305, Bessemer, AL 35021, or email them to: joniholt@bham.rr.com.

FULL-TIME PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN'S PASTOR: The First Baptist Church of Mauldin, S.C., is seeking a full-time preschool and children's pastor. Send resumé to: First Baptist Mauldin, 150 South Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662, or email: wleonard@fbcmauldin.org. For more information on the job description and profile, visit www.fbcmauldin.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Carey Baptist Association (in Louisiana) is seeking a new director of missions. For more information, see our website at www.careyassoc.org or send a resumé to: DOM Search Committee, P.O. Box 1302, Lake Charles, LA 70602.

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 resumé through Feb. 15, 2013. Resumé may be submitted to: Bessemer Baptist Association, 1331 Fairfax Avenue, Bessemer, AL 35020, or admin@bessemerbaptist.org.

INDEPENDENT SALES ASSOCIATE CONTRACTOR: The 170-year-old *Alabama Baptist* is an award-winning statewide weekly newspaper with more

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

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIRLIFTS: Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

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.

CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: Christian Values Technology Company seeks mature busi-

ness professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands-on support and apprenticeship-style training. For complete information, call Paul at 888-710-6994.

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.

DESTIN OR PENSACOLA BEACH FRONT RESORT: Fully furnished, luxury beachfront resort. Great rates. Family-oriented condos sleep 4 to 8. Call 1-800-874-0402. HolidayBeachResort.com.

Want to know God?

By Pastor John M. Hambright
Enon Baptist Church, Morris

Do you want to know God? That is an interesting question. There are groups who would answer categorically, "No!" They are atheists, agnostic or just simply disinterested. Many never give the question any thought.

Then there is the group that says, "Yes, but not right now." If you could explain, as I will shortly, how they can know God, they would agree, but now isn't the time. I tend to find these people have some secret sin or hidden agenda for their life and think God would somehow interfere with their plans.

Here is one of the good things of life. This thing is God wants to know you. God is really interested in what is going on in your life and is concerned about your spiritual well-being. He is interested in where you are going to spend eternity. All this is motivated by His great love for you. God has tried to make Himself known to you through creation and through conscience. His most important revelation of Himself to you is through His Son, Jesus Christ. So if you want to know God, you do it through His Son. Here are some steps you can follow to know Him in a personal way.

First, you must recognize you are sinful and that God is holy. The wages of your sin is death or spiritual separation from God. There is a gulf between you and God so that you cannot get to Him. The amazing thing is what you cannot do, God did for you on Christmas morning. Because you could not get to Him, He came to you.

Second, you must recognize Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sins. In paying for your sins, He made a bridge, or a way, for you to cross that gulf and come to God. Through His death, Jesus reaches out to sinful humanity and a righteous God and makes a way of salvation.

Last, you must call upon Him in trust and faith. The Bible says in Romans 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall be saved." People in trouble call for help. Help for your sins is calling upon Jesus. You call upon Him through a simple sinner's prayer. If you will do that, you will know God and most of all, He will know you.

January Bible study



An in-depth look at Holy Week • 1 of 5 in a series

Sixty-five years ago Southern Baptists began promoting an annual January Bible Study in their churches.

This year, for the first time, the subject of the study is the last week of Jesus' historical life on earth — referred to by many as Holy Week — with the principal biblical text being Luke 19:28–24:53.

About a fourth of each of the four Gospels is devoted to Jesus' final week, so it is not surprising that across the centuries Christians have given a lot of attention to it.

We will follow the practice of the author of this year's Adult Reader's Guide, Rob Futral, and summarize the events of each day of Holy Week and then attempt to discern their implications for us today.

Fisher Humphreys

Enter Jesus; see His anger at 'den of robbers'

Sunday

The movie director Alfred Hitchcock is quoted as saying, "Drama is life with the dull parts left out." By that definition the first day of Holy Week was dramatic, but it also was simple.

Jesus decided to celebrate the Passover festival by making a pilgrimage to the Holy City. It was His custom to travel on foot, and it would have been appropriate for Him to make His pilgrimage into Jerusalem on foot. However, claiming a well-documented right of kings in antiquity to requisition a means of transport, Jesus arranged to enter Jerusalem on a donkey.

We today think of a donkey as a humble mode of transportation, but that is not the way Jews of the first century thought of it. The Hebrew Scriptures foretold that the Messianic King, the Savior whom God had promised to send, would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (see Zech. 9:9). When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey He was effectively offering Himself to his people as the Messianic King for whom they had been waiting. The people received Him as King, saying: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven!" (Luke 19:38).

Today Jesus continues to come to people in God's name and with God's peace. When we receive Jesus we experience the peace of God in the deepest places in our hearts: in the places where we are hurting, anxious and ashamed. King Jesus comes to us with the same command He gave to the fishermen along the seashore long ago: "Follow Me."

Monday

Mark (11:11) says that Jesus left Jerusalem Sunday evening and spent the night in a nearby village, Bethany. The next day He returned to Jerusalem, went to the temple and drove the merchants out (see Luke 19:45–46).

Apparently there were two reasons Jesus was angry with the merchants in the temple.

First, He was angry because the temple was being misused. He quoted Isaiah (53:6): "My house shall be a house of prayer." Then, quoting Jeremiah (7:11), he added, "but you have made it a den of robbers." The temple, the house of God where people came to worship God, was being used for wrong purposes.

There may have been excessive commercialization. Two kinds of business were being transacted in the temple. Merchants were selling birds and small animals to the people, who then gave them to the priests to be sacrificed to God. Bankers exchanged the money the pilgrims brought with them for silver coins minted in Tyre. This was the only kind of money that was acceptable for paying the temple tax that funded the work of the temple.

Did these practices trouble Jesus? Perhaps. But they

By Fisher Humphreys

Fisher Humphreys is professor of divinity, emeritus, for Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.



were helpful to the worshippers and therefore seem to be an honorable way for merchants and bankers to make a living. Perhaps the merchants and bankers had become greedy, but the Gospels don't say this. Perhaps they were cheating the pilgrims, many of whom would have been poor people. Jesus' reference to a den of robbers may suggest that.

There is a third possibility. The phrase den of robbers may refer simply to a gathering place for evil people. In that case Jesus would not be referring to the bankers and merchants but to anyone who was meeting in the temple area to make evil plans. Perhaps Zealots were meeting to plot revolution against the Roman army which then occupied Israel. Because few soldiers would have been in the temple, it would have been an ideal place for revolutionaries to meet.

In any case the people had forgotten who lives in "the house of the Lord." They should have remembered that God's presence among them was a privilege, and they should have acted accordingly.

Instead they neglected God in favor of one or more other practices such as making a living by banking and commerce, cheating poor pilgrims or plotting revolution against the Romans. Jesus was angry because the people were taking God's presence for granted. Either the other

things were more important to them than God — which is idolatry — or they were so sure that they had God in their pocket that even in God's house they could afford to ignore God — which is presumptuous and arrogant.

Something else may have made Jesus angry too. It was what was happening in the outer court. To appreciate this we must understand the layout of the temple. The temple mount was enormous, about 35 acres. Most of that vast area was known as the court of the Gentiles and was accessible to everyone. It existed because God desired to be worshipped not just by the Jews but by all the people of the world. "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people," God had told the prophet Isaiah (see Isa. 56:1–8).

And some Gentiles did worship the God of Israel (see John 12:20). They were attracted to Israel's God by Israel's conviction that there is one and only one true and living God and also by the high moral standards of the Torah.

But some of the Jewish people treated the court of the Gentiles with contempt. They felt free to interrupt the Gentiles who came into that court to worship God. They walked through the court carrying vessels and used the court for commerce, possibly dishonest commerce, and they may have used it to plot against Gentiles such as the Romans.

In summary, the two things that made Jesus angry were that people were taking God for granted and that people were looking with contempt on the Gentiles who came to God's house.

We should ask ourselves two questions. First, are we taking God for granted? Because of the attention those of us who are ministers must give to the functioning of the church, we are especially tempted to fall into this sin.

Second, are there groups of people upon whom we feel entitled to look with contempt? Do we think it's all right to be contemptuous of people of a different race, or of rural people, or of liberals, or of Fundamentalists, or of divorced people?

If the answer to either question is "yes," the story of Jesus' cleansing of the temple tells us how Jesus feels about our attitudes. 🙏

As He was drawing near — already on the way down the Mount of Olives — the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.

Luke 19:37

Murder, conflicts mark international scene; SBC elects first African-American president

(continued from page 1)
for some state ministries in order to focus on church planting.

In September, state convention executives met with NAMB leaders about this and decided to move forward in unity to reach the lost despite disagreeing on strategy and placement of funding. Some of the Alabama ministries that lost NAMB funding will be absorbed into the SBOM budget.

But even so, NAMB is still investing in some traditional ministries, and Alabama is still promoting church planting. In June, NAMB announced that it had expanded its disaster relief fleet to include three new 18-wheelers and four heavy-duty Ford trucks to pull trailers. And the SBOM, as part of FutureFocus, put new emphasis on church planting, specifically new multicultural churches.

Alabama Baptists also set their sights on expanding Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections, a strategy to partner state Baptists with missionaries from Alabama who are serving internationally.

The strategy goes hand in hand with the International Mission Board's (IMB) Embrace initiative, which encourages churches to adopt an unengaged, unreached people group in order to see it reached. The initiative has seen much success, and it gained steam during 2012.

But the IMB also saw tragedy in September when Christian worker Cheryl Harvey was found stabbed to death in Jordan after 24 years of serving as a teacher there.

And there were other tragedies that rocked the national and international scene.

Violent civil war raged in Syria for all of 2012, and the year ended with a sudden flare-up between Israel and Gaza that involved several days of intense rocket fire.

Back in the United States, a longtime Baptist leader found himself under metaphorical fire for most of the year.

Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), apologized multiple times in 2012 for comments he made on his weekly call-in radio show March 31. He was accused of being racially insensitive in handling the matter of the Trayvon Martin killing, as well as quoting material without attribution.

He issued his first apology April 16, then a five-part apology May 9 after meeting with key African-American leaders.

The ERLC executive committee was appreciative of the apolo-

gies but still handed down two reprimands midyear — one for the racial comments and the other for plagiarism. They also axed Land's radio show.

The commission must "redouble our efforts ... to heal reopened wounds," the committee said.

In July, Land announced his retirement, set for Oct. 23, 2013 — 25 years from the date he entered the ERLC's presidency.

But something else related to the SBC and race relations happened around the same time — Fred Luter Jr. was elected the first African-American president of the national convention June 19.

During the SBC annual meeting in his city, Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, was elected by "acclamation" — cheers, applause and a standing ovation.

Normally the SBC recording secretary casts one vote on behalf of all when there is only one candidate, but then-president Bryant Wright thought it appropriate to go a different direction.

He asked messengers to stand if it was "their pleasure" to elect Luter, and their ovation was overwhelming.

"To God be the glory for the things He has done," Luter said, wiping away tears. "God bless you. I love you." (BP contributed)



LAND



HARVEY



\$500 DISCOUNT TO SENIORS & VETERANS

A Beautiful Bath at a Heavenly Price

If you have a bathroom that has outdated tile, mold or mildew that you just cannot get rid of, tubs and showers that are stained and look old, call Charlie Thornton at Dream Baths today. We can turn that ugly bathroom into a beautiful one that you can afford in just one day. We are specialists in acrylic bathroom remodeling that is truly beautiful and very easy to maintain and keep clean at a price that nobody will beat. It will never be out-of-date, and there is a lifetime warranty on all work and products used. We give GOD THE GLORY for our success and being able to provide a high-quality product at an affordable price to our customers across the state. **CALL CHARLIE TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE. YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID.**

sears **Certified bathroom remodeler for Sears Home Services in the State of Alabama.**

\$ Ask about our no money down, no interest 12 months same as cash program*
*Approved credit through Enter Bank Corp.

Locally owned and operated in Alabama for more than 25 years

Dream Baths of Alabama

Call 334-312-1825 or 1-855-849-5048
(toll-free) for a free estimate.

www.dreambathsalabama.com • www.alabamasafetybath.com



Leeds Stained Glass
Where Art and Love of God Intersect

Why purchase stained glass windows?

- To share the vision of your church
- To beautify your church sanctuary
- To honor parents and family members
- To provide a lasting tribute to your love of God, church, and family

For over 30 years ...
Leeds Stained Glass has provided southeast churches with a variety of beautiful and professionally crafted stained glass windows.

Best regards,
Terry Barnes, Owner

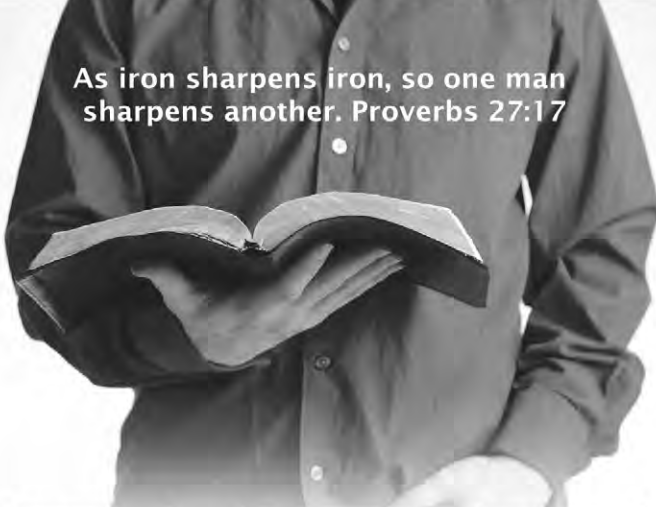
E-mail or call for a FREE, NO-OBLIGATION consultation on designs and pricing.

info@LeedsStainedGlass.com • 1-888-699-9679
www.LeedsStainedGlass.com



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

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17





Johnny Hunt
Pastor
First Baptist Church
Woodstock, GA



Phil Hoskins
Pastor
Higher Ground Baptist Church
Kingsport, TN



Junior Hill
Evangelist
Hartselle, AL



This Hope
First Baptist Church
Woodstock, GA



MID-SOUTH MEN'S BIBLE CONFERENCE
February 22-23, 2013
Faith Baptist Church • Bartlett, Tennessee

Go to www.myfaithbaptist.org for registration and information.

Family Matters

How Do We Best Love One Another?

Lisa Keane, MA, LPC-S, RPT, NCC
Clinical Director, Pathways Professional Counseling

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

We have all heard the two greatest commandments. As believers, we are commanded first to love the Lord with everything we have and, secondly, to love our neighbor as yourself. Learning to love people is not as simple as saying you want to love someone. Love is action! 1 Corinthians 13 defines love with action words: patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, is not arrogant or rude, it does not insist on its own way and is not irritable or resentful. Love is just not simply a choice, it is work.

We have people in our lives who are easy to love. However, there are those people in our lives who might be difficult to love, but we are still called to love them as we love ourselves.

So how do we do this? How do we best love others? The answer is to discover their love language. We all receive love and give love differently. According to Dr. Gary Chapman there are five love languages: acts of service, quality time, physical touch, gifts, and words of affirmation. Based on this, Chapman wrote "The 5 Love Languages" originally as a marriage book, but this theory of different love languages has expanded to many different types of relationships. From parents, to kids, to co-workers to marriage, this idea of love languages can revolutionize the way that you love people.

This is important, because if you are trying to express love one way, but the other person receives love a different way, it is as if one of you speaks Spanish while the other speaks French. You are both saying the same thing, but the meaning and desire are lost in translation.

First things first, though. You must discover your own love language. It is important to know what your love language is because most of us communicate love in the same way we receive love. Here are descriptions of the five love languages from Chapman's book:

- Words of Affirmation – compliments, encouraging words and verbal affirmation
- Quality Time – undistracted one-on-one time together (i.e. no cell phone, TV, iPad, etc.) or doing an activity that both parties enjoy
- Receiving Gifts – usually gifts that are meaningful rather than expensive
- Acts of Service – helping with tasks, household chores, or other items with a willing spirit
- Physical Touch – hugs, kisses, closeness and sexual intimacy in marriage, but physical touch does not always equal sexuality

Now that you know what your love language is and you are becoming more familiar with the different types, you can begin to discover the best way to love the people in your life. Look for times they seem to really be connected to you. What were you doing? Spending quality time together, expressing words of affirmation, or giving them a meaningful gift? Observe times when they complain about feeling disconnected in relationships. Did they feel hurt when someone didn't notice their hard work, or were they frustrated when no one helped them with their task? What are the differences? You can also simply ask! They might just know exactly what they need. Then, take time to brainstorm some ideas of how best to speak their language and love them best. Remember, we cannot expect everyone to receive love the same way we do. If we truly want to love people best, we need to meet them where they are and speak their language.

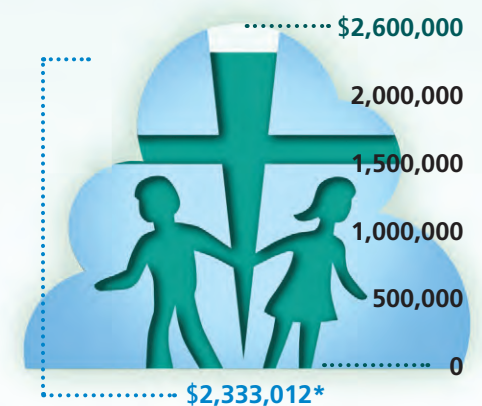
Want a more thorough evaluation of your love language? You can take the quiz based on Dr. Gary Chapman's book, "The 5 Love Languages," at www.5lovelanguages.com, or by scanning the QR code.



The Languages of Apology

Did you know that there are languages of apology, just as there are love languages? Dr. Gary Chapman teamed with Jennifer Thomas to write "The Five Languages of Apology." In February, Lisa Keane, Clinical Director of our Pathways Professional Counseling, will be reviewing the book, and we will give away a copy of "The Five Languages of Apology" as well as "The 5 Love Languages." Connect with Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and Pathways on Facebook, Twitter and our Ask Anne blog (www.pathwaysprofessional.org/AskAnneColumn.en.html) in February to find out more and enter! Our social links are below.

2012 ANNUAL OFFERING



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

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries
P.O. Box 361767
Birmingham, AL 35236-1767
Telephone: (205) 982-1112
Toll Free: (888) 720-8805



On Facebook? Find us there at:
[Facebook.com/AlabamaChild](https://www.facebook.com/AlabamaChild)
[Facebook.com/PathwaysProfessionalCounseling](https://www.facebook.com/PathwaysProfessionalCounseling)



Are you on Twitter? Follow us at:
[Twitter.com/AlabamaChildOrg](https://twitter.com/AlabamaChildOrg)
[Twitter.com/PathwaysCounsel](https://twitter.com/PathwaysCounsel)

www.alabamachild.org
www.pathwaysprofessional.com

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 6

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen
Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

RESTORING THE REPENTANT
Hosea 13:4-6; 14:1-9

Need of Repentance (13:4-6)

Chapter 13 begins with God, through Hosea, reminding the people of their wayward ways.

He recounts for them how Ephraim had been a powerful nation but then turned to Baal and sinned against God. In fact, their sinfulness had increased continually as the nation had become stubborn in their wicked ways.

However, even though the Israelites had turned their back on God, He alone was still their savior. He was the one who had brought them up out of Egypt. But once the Israelites had settled in their new land and prospered, they forgot God.

Unfortunately, many people realize their need for God only when they are faced with problems — financial, physical or relational. When our lives are going smoothly, we tend to forget our dependence and need for God and how God is the reason for our “good fortunes.” Jesus speaks about this in His parable of the soils (Luke 8:14) when He talks about the seed that fell on thorny ground, because the worries of this world as well as its pleasures made the soil unfruitful. When we turn our eyes away from God, we rely more on our own abilities or the abilities of others, failing to recognize that humans are frail and fallible. We often become comfortable in our lives and slowly drift from God.

The Israelites never set out to depart from God — it was a slow movement. We need to take stock of our lives to see if we are really trusting in God or if we are just giving Him lip service.

Call to Repentance (14:1-3)

Because of the Israelites’ spiritual rebellion, Hosea pleads with his kinsmen to turn back to God. He advises them to return with words of repentance and ask for forgiveness of sin. Our attitude toward sin needs to be one of heartfelt repentance that leads to actions that match our sincer-

ity. Hosea, in giving the Israelites a pattern for repentance, shows that they should no longer trust in foreign gods and other countries. We need to understand that God does not have to forgive our sins, but out of love for us He chooses to do so. Many Christians sin with the flippant attitude that it does not matter because God will forgive them. Our attitude needs to be one of humbleness and thankfulness to God for His forgiveness.

Results of Repentance (14:4-8)

Should the Israelites turn from their sinful actions and turn to God, He will heal them and forgive their sins. He will restore them to a position of prominence and dignity. The message is the same in chapter 14 as it was in chapter 2. God does not change — He is always willing to forgive us and restore and give us spiritual healing.

As the father in the story of the prodigal son (in Luke 15) accepts his son back joyfully, God also desires us to be reconciled with Him and rejoices when we return to Him.

It gives us insight into God’s character — He is not the angry figure who longs to judge us and find us guilty; instead He is a loving Father who disciplines those He loves in order to help us make proper choices that are for our eternal benefit.

Wisdom of Repentance (14:9)

Hosea concludes his book with an exhortation for God’s people to be wise and live according to God’s ways.

The verse reads like a verse from the Psalms or Proverbs, which changes the tone of the book. Turning from a chastisement of the Israelites and a plea for repentance, this verse shows that the truths about God as seen in the book of Hosea are universal truths that any wise person should heed and apply.

We are to repent and strive to be righteous — this is what wise people do.

The message is the same as that of John the Baptist and of Jesus: Repent! And it is still applicable for us today.

Bible Studies for Life By Michael Wilson
Director, Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence, Samford University

NAHUM: A MESSAGE OF GOD’S
JUDGMENT

Nahum 1:7-9, 12-13; 2:8-13; 3:18-19

Many Old Testament books include examples of God’s mercy, even when judgment was being demonstrated. However, in Nahum’s prophecy the Lord is merciful and compassionate only to those who trust in God. The name Nahum means “comfort” or “consolation” yet the prophet does not voice consolation for the wicked. He declared there would be no mercy for Assyria, a cruel nation that cared nothing for the God of the Hebrews. In an earlier time the people of Nineveh responded to the call to repentance given by Jonah. But things changed. Reverence for Yahweh waned. Evil again prevailed. Nahum declared judgment would come to the Assyrians; freedom and hope would come to those they abused. God demonstrated consolation to the Hebrews by executing judgment on their Assyrian oppressors.

God Tempers Judgment with Mercy
(1:7-9, 12-13)

It might seem a contradiction for Nahum to describe the Lord as “good” and also announce God’s complete destruction of Nineveh. Verse 8 can also be rendered “God’s enemies chase darkness,” which emphasizes the pointlessness of a life lived contrary to the way of obedience to God. Darkness is a powerful metaphor in Scripture and is often used to represent evil. The wrath of God would come like a flood to those who chased darkness and were merciless toward God’s people. However, the mercy and steadfast love of God would wash over all who sought God for refuge. We know from Scripture how God demonstrated steadfast love and faithfulness to the covenant He made with the Hebrew people. We also know of the frequent unfaithfulness of God’s people. Sadly, then as now, folks like you and me still find it easy to turn from the way of God and God’s love, grace and refuge, choosing rather to chase darkness.

God Judges Evil Nations (2:8-13)

During Nahum’s lifetime the people of God witnessed the divine judgment of Assyria. Though the nations of Babylon and Media acted together as the “shatterer” that broke the powerful Assyrian dynasty (2:1), God was at work for good on behalf of the Hebrew people. Yet God’s patience with them would later be tested as they chose evil and disobedience over faithfulness. How ironic that God’s judgment would again include using the Babylonians as a shatterer — but this time of the heart-hardened Hebrews. Theologian P.T. Forsyth described God’s judgment in this way: “If [God] cares enough for us to be angry, [God] cares enough to redeem.” Matthew’s Gospel (21:42-44) records Jesus’ words regarding “the stone the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone.” Jesus said those who fall on this stone will be broken. But those on whom the stone falls will be crushed. Better to be repentant and broken over one’s disobedience than to experience crushing, shattering judgment.

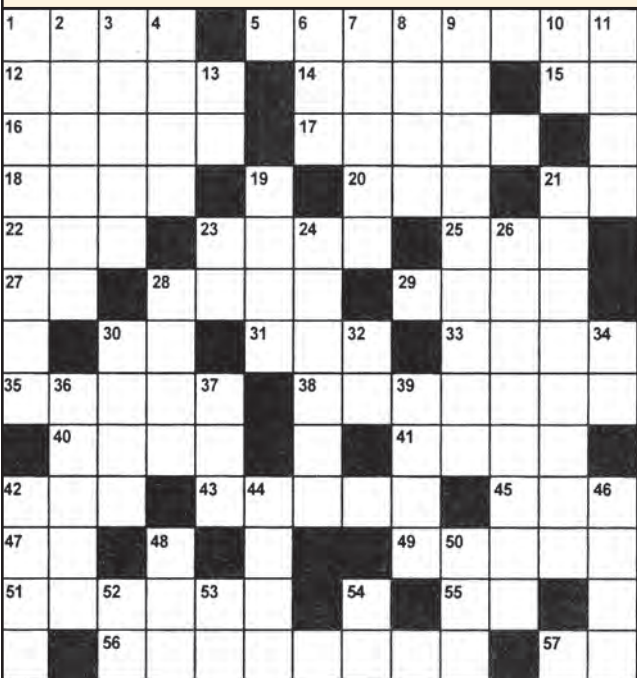
God Judges Sinful Leaders (3:18-19)

The closing sentences of Nahum’s prophecy are reserved for the Assyrian king. The words read like a taunt. The king’s leaders are sleeping the sleep of death. His once-powerful armies are in disarray, having fled to the mountains, with no one to lead them. The king himself has suffered a mortal wound and nothing will ease his pain. In a final jab, Nahum says in effect, “When word gets out you’re gone, everyone will shout woo-hoo!”

Maybe you recently sang, “I Heard the Bells On Christmas Day.” One stanza goes, “And in despair I bowed my head: ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said, ‘For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, goodwill to men.’” In a way, our situation is similar to Nahum’s. But because The Light of the World has come, we know “the wrong shall fail, the right prevail.” God’s justice, righteousness and love will surely make it so.

Christian Crossword

By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- 1. All things work together for _____. (Rom. 8:28)
- 5. Thou shalt be a _____. (Gen. 12:2)
- 12. Provoke not your children to _____. (Col. 3:21)
- 14. Capably.
- 15. The Lord _____ high is mightier. (Ps. 93:4)
- 16. And _____ her head. (2 Kings 9:30)
- 17. His deadly _____ was healed. (Rev. 13:3)
- 18. Weeded, cultivated.
- 20. National Recovery Administration. (abbr.)
- 21. _____ the time appointed. (Gen. 18:14)
- 22. Ensign. (abbr.)
- 23. He _____ is my rock. (Ps. 62:2)
- 25. A precious stone.
- 27. Royal Society. (abbr.)
- 28. Vigor, strength.
- 29. For our lamps are _____ out. (Matt. 25:8)
- 30. Sent men from Jericho to _____. (Josh. 7:2)
- 31. Indicates three.
- 33. Earns, gains.
- 35. _____, thou art the Son of

- God. (John 1:49)
- 38. Turned into the _____ of summer. (Ps. 32:4)
- 40. Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, _____. (Rom. 8:15)
- 41. Because thou didst _____ on the Lord. (2 Chron. 16:8)
- 42. A period of time.
- 43. Perhaps, possibly.
- 45. Let him _____. (James 1:6)
- 47. Learn to _____ well. (Isa. 1:17)
- 49. Shall we _____ with the sword? (Luke 22:49)
- 51. He that shall _____ unto the end. (Mark 13:13)
- 55. I _____ the door. (John 10:9)
- 56. Have _____ to righteousness. (Rom. 9:30)
- 57. The Lord stirred _____ the spirit. (Ezra 1:1)

Down

- 1. A _____ of sycamore fruit. (Amos 7:14)
- 2. Leeks, and the _____ and the garlic. (Num. 11:5)
- 3. Fabled giants.

- 4. But in _____ and in truth. (1 John 3:18)
- 6. Sin is the transgression of the _____. (1 John 3:4)
- 7. Horns of ivory and _____. (Ezek. 27:15)
- 8. To pronounce indistinctly.
- 9. I ever taught in the _____. (John 18:20)
- 10. Do thyself _____ harm. (Acts 16:28)
- 11. Strain at a _____. (Matt. 23:24)
- 13. Rural Delivery. (abbr.)
- 19. An individual part of a whole.
- 21. A ligure, an agate and an _____. (Ex. 39:12)
- 23. We live therefore, _____ die. (Rom. 14:8)
- 24. Butter in a _____ dish. (Judg. 5:25)
- 26. From Engedi even unto _____. (Ezek. 47:10)
- 28. A bracket on the ship’s mast to support the trestle trees.
- 30. He said, _____, Father. (Mark 14:36)
- 32. Symbol for element iridium.
- 34. Saint. (abbr.)

- 36. He will bless the house of _____. (Ps. 115:12)
- 37. But whom say ye that _____? (Mark 8:29; 2 words)
- 39. Minerals from which metals can be mined.
- 42. The garden of _____. (Joel 2:3)
- 44. Height times width.
- 46. _____ yourselves in the love of God. (Jude 21)
- 48. _____ it also in writing. (Ezra 1:1)
- 50. The nations are _____. (Jer. 51:7)
- 52. District Attorney. (abbr.)
- 53. Right. (abbr.)
- 54. And it shall come to pass _____ the last days. (Isa. 2:2)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Buddhist monks lead attack on church in Sri Lanka

WEERAKETIYA, Sri Lanka — A mob of about 1,000 people in southern Sri Lanka, led by Buddhist monks, protested the presence of a church by overpowering police, vandalizing property and beating the pastor on Dec. 9, Christian sources said.

The attackers destroyed the church's furniture, equipment and vehicles and assaulted the pastor, identified only as Pradeep, and two police officers.

The pastor suffered injuries in his lower abdomen, but has not been able to go to a hospital for treatment because some of the attackers are monitoring him, the source added. No one had been arrested at press time.

The church estimates the damage to be around \$4,000.

The day before the attack, local Buddhist monks visited the pastor and told him that permission from Buddhist clergy was needed for Christian worship, the source said. The pastor replied that freedom of religion is enshrined in the country's constitution. The monks insisted he close down the church or face destruction.

"Buddhist monks are part of the ruling coalition government, and they operate with impunity," the source explained. "This is not an isolated incident; at least 50 incidents of violence against Christians have been recorded by Christian groups this year."

Iran said to be killing imprisoned pastor by neglect

KARAJ, Iran — The condition of an Iranian pastor languishing in prison on charges of "actions against the Islamic state" is deteriorating, according to sources close to the prisoner.

The sources say the health of pastor Behnam Irani, a married father of two, is deteriorating rapidly, according to Jason DeMars of Present Truth Ministries (PTM).

Due to injuries sustained from beatings by prison guards and other inmates, Irani has suffered acute stomach ulcers and colon complications, according to a November report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW).

In January 2011, Irani was sentenced to a year in Ghezel Hesar, a notoriously violent prison, for alleged "actions against national security" — leading house-church worship, according to PTM.

A further danger to Irani is that the judge declared him an apostate from Islam, a verdict that could bring the death penalty. Sources close to the case have told aid agencies that officials are intentionally denying him treatment so that he will die from his injuries.

With his illnesses, he may not survive the duration of his prison sentence, according to the CSW report.

Swedish Christian worker dies in Pakistan shooting

STOCKHOLM — Birgitta Almby, Bible school teacher and director of a Christian-run technical training institute in Lahore, died Dec. 11 in her native Sweden from wounds sustained in a Dec. 3 shooting by suspected Islamic extremists. She was 70.

Shot by two armed men outside her house in Lahore's upscale Model Town as she returned from her Full Gospel Assemblies (FGA) office in the Kot Lakhpat area, Almby died at Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm, FGA Bible School Principal Liaqat Qaiser told *Morning Star News*.

Almby, director at the FGA Technical Training Institute and also a teacher at the FGA Bible School, was shot in the chest and the bullet damaged her left lung. Initially she was taken to Lahore's Jinnah Hospital, where doctors removed the bullet and said her condition was critical because of excessive bleeding.

She had served the Pakistani Christian community for 38 years.

Police protecting extremists who attacked church

BOOTHAPADA, India — Refusing to register a complaint against Hindu extremists who stoned and beat a pastor until he was unconscious, police in Madhya Pradesh state also struck a Christian who tried to report the attack, area church leaders said.

Four police officers on Nov. 30 broke into the worship service of the Gospel Church in Boothpada village, Ratlam District and ordered the Christians to leave, said church pastor Govind Meida. A mob of Hindu extremists followed, shouting anti-Christian chants.

Police have not registered a case against the extremists, and area Christians said a police officer also slapped a church member when he went to the district police station to file a complaint.

Online poker bill dead for now

The effort to legalize online poker in Congress died before the end of the year.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nevada, announced Dec. 14 he had given up on his own bill with barely two weeks left in the 112th Congress. "[W]e have simply run out of time in this legislative calendar," Reid said, according to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

Reid said he was "disappointed" but added that he and Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., "remain committed to this issue and it will be a priority for us in the new Congress."

Gambling opponents applauded Reid's announcement.

Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land called Reid's announcement "good news for America's families."

"[They] bear the emotional and financial brunt when a family member becomes addicted to gambling. Internet gambling is a scourge that helps feed the fastest-growing addiction in the United States," said Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

It had appeared that an Internet poker bill drafted by Reid, along with conservative Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., might gain Senate passage before Congress adjourned for the year. Though the proposal never

was introduced, opponents had expressed concern it might gain Senate approval as part of must-pass legislation. Heller and Kyl had said there was enough Republican support to gain Senate passage.

Land had urged Kyl to withdraw his support for the bill. In a Dec. 5 letter, Land told Kyl the legislation would not only provide "government sanction" for a form of gambling but would establish "a regulatory mechanism that is certain to be used to introduce other forms of Internet gambling in the future."

Potential domino effect

While the Reid-Kyl proposal reportedly would have outlawed most online gambling other than poker, foes said it would have weakened a 2006 federal law designed to bar most Internet gambling.

The 2006 measure, the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, requires financial institutions to block credit card and other payments to online wagering businesses, which primarily are located overseas. Gambling opponents, with the agreement of the U.S. Justice Department at the time, argued a 1961 law that prohibited wagering over telephone wires also barred Internet wagering.

Supporters of online gambling gained impetus for their legalization efforts when a late 2011 opinion by the Justice Department contended the 2006 law applies only to sports betting. Georgia and Illinois are now selling lottery draw tickets on the Internet, and other state legislatures are considering bills to legalize online gambling, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

Kyl, who supported the 2006 law, contended the new legislation would have helped limit the spread of gambling, according to the *Journal*.

Foes of his bill disagreed.

Stop Predatory Gambling (SPG), a Washington-based organization that combats government partnerships with gambling, said legalizing online gambling would result in Facebook "casinos" that "would have a devastating impact on America's children under 18 and deeply worsen the nation's epidemic of gambling addiction."

"Legalizing Facebook casinos represents the biggest expansion of casino gambling in history, opening a Las Vegas casino in every home, office, dorm room and smart phone in America, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year," according to SPG. (BP)



By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Someone You Should Know

NANCY PETREY

South Luverne Baptist Church, Luverne
Alabama-Crenshaw Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Isaiah 53:4-5

FAVORITE HYMN: "His Eye Is on the Sparrow"

HOBBIES: Reading, writing, playing the piano, singing

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Curtis, a retired pastor; four children: Perry, Susan, Jim and Bert; and 12 grandchildren



PETREY

Nancy Petrey has been the church pianist at South Luverne Baptist Church for six and a half years, having also served as choir director several years ago. She teaches an adult Sunday School class on a rotating system and also serves on the steering committee for Crenshaw County Women for Christ. Over the years Petrey has been a choral teacher in public schools, piano teacher, church choir director, church pianist, songwriter and soloist. In addition she has written and directed church plays and has recorded two CDs. She also obtained a master's degree in religious education in the Middle East from the Arkansas Institute for Holy Land Studies, learned modern Hebrew, has visited Israel seven times and has written a book, "Jewish Roots Journey, Memoirs of a Mizpah."

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the

beginning of your faith journey?

A: I have always been active in church, but it was during a Lay Witness Mission at our Methodist church in Tupelo, Miss., in 1968, that my husband and I totally gave our lives to Christ. We were nurtured in a home cell group by Spirit-filled teachers, sharing and prayer.

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

A: When God called my husband into full-time ministry as a Methodist pastor Jan. 1, 1976, I also felt Him call me. In the churches we served in Mississippi [more than] 23 years, which included seven years in a non-denominational church we built, I led the music ministry and served as church secretary.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: (Along with the ministry in the church,) I have been called on to conduct Passover Seders and to

go places to speak and present seminars. I regularly pass along information concerning events in Israel, etc., to an email group. I have designed Bible and Jewish Roots courses, which I first taught at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College but later transferred to my church.

Q: What do you get from serving in ministry?

A: Even with my hearing loss, the Lord still enables me to play the piano at church and also sing in the choir. I feel it is a miracle, and I greatly enjoy playing the piano.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My husband actually led the first Israel tour I went on, and he has been with me two other times. He is very supportive. ... All the children are musical and appreciate my musical talents given me by the Lord.



IMB photo

In classes and after-school clubs that Michal Mitchell (left) and Sarah Cowan lead, students learn not only about character, values and decision-making skills, but also about the gospel. Students desperately need to hear a message of hope as they live in corrupt, crime-ridden townships.

Changing lives

South African students find hope for future

It's hard not to be happy around 12-year-old Olwetu. She greets visitors with an infectious smile and sparkling eyes. Usually surrounded by friends, the outgoing South African seventh grader is always smiling, laughing and talking.

But this is not typical behavior among Olwetu's peers — hopeless is the best word to describe Xhosa youth in the slums of Cape Town.

Most young people here must deal with myriad issues — abuse, violence, drugs, gangs, rape, loss of one or both parents, poor education, HIV/AIDS, poverty. These problems have far-reaching tentacles affecting every family in the township.

"We began to see students that were asking ... 'What do I do when I've been raped by my uncle?' 'What do I do when my father and mother are abusing me?' 'I don't have any food at home.' 'My mom and dad don't have work.' 'My mom and dad are dead and I live with my aunt,'" said Bruce Erickson, a Southern Baptist representative in Cape Town.

"There are so many kids that live in such difficult situations without hope. They don't see a future for themselves here in South Africa. They don't see a future for themselves in their homes."

Originally from California, Bruce and his wife, Sheri, have served in South Africa for nearly four years. They have three children, one of whom is in the U.S. attending college. Focused on reaching the Xhosa youth in Cape Town with the love of Christ, the Ericksons use their educational skills to interact with the students at their "collection points" — schools.

Thirty percent of South Africa's population is age 15 and under, compared to only 13 percent in the U.S., according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit that focuses on health care issues in the U.S. and abroad.

"What an incredible opportunity for us to reach a huge part of this population and really have a chance to impact a nation for Christ," Sheri Erickson said.

The Ericksons lead a project for OneLife, an International Mission Board (IMB) initiative that connects students in the U.S. with missions projects around the world. The Cape Town project's goal is to minister to South African learners — primary and secondary school students.

"We teach life orientation classes, which [include] sex education, character building, being a good citizen and also learning how to deal with bullies and gangs and abuse — different things that the kids would face in their life," said Sarah Cowan, a journeyman with the IMB from South Carolina. She and Michal Mitchell, a journeyman from Illinois, have been assisting the Ericksons in the youth ministry.

Seeing lives transformed

"After school, we have leadership clubs ... girls [and boys] clubs, worship services — different ways that we are able to interact with a few of the learners from our classes," Cowan said, "and we're able to go deeper with them and to share the gospel."

Olwetu met Cowan and Mitchell in the after-school girls club at Mzamomhle Primary School, one of seven schools where the short-term missionaries and the Ericksons teach. It was there that Olwetu received Christ. "They give me so many courages to just carry on with life and love Jesus, as He forgave me of my sins — so that's how I live," Olwetu said.

Bruce's vision is to see more lives transformed like Olwetu's — not to temporarily engage youth while they are school-age but to build a lasting Christian foundation. Learn more about OneLife at onelifematters.org or email go@onelifematters.org. (IMB)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Evangelical student settles with Michigan university

YPSILANTI, Mich. — A graduate counseling student who was expelled from Eastern Michigan University after citing her faith when she declined to advise a gay client has settled with the school.

Julia Ward, citing her evangelical Christian beliefs, disagreed with professors who told her she was required to support the sexual orientation of her clients. She was assigned a client who sought counseling on a same-sex relationship but later asked to have the client referred to another counselor.

In January the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Ward might have been expelled because of her faith and sent the case back to a lower court.

"Public universities shouldn't force students to violate their religious beliefs to get a degree," said Jeremy Tedesco, a lawyer with the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), who represented Ward before the appeals court. "The 6th Circuit rightly understood this and ruled appropriately, so the university has done the right thing in settling this case."

The ADF, which was formerly known as Alliance Defense Fund, said Ward's expulsion will be removed from her record.

The university in Ypsilanti, Mich., issued a statement saying the settlement totaled \$75,000, and the school's curriculum requirements remain intact.

Court demands contraception mandate exemptions

WASHINGTON — Foes of the federal contraception mandate are cheering a Dec. 18 appeals court decision requiring the Obama administration to devise exemptions to the new rule for two Christian colleges.

The two colleges, Catholic Belmont Abbey College in North Carolina and evangelical Wheaton College in Illinois, filed suit against the Obama administration before the new rule went into effect Aug. 1, and argued that the mandate is a violation of the schools' religious freedom.

Opponents of the mandate may not like the exemption that the administration eventually crafts, but the December ruling is still heartening, said Richard Garnett, a law and political science professor at the University of Notre Dame.

"It's holding the administration's feet to the fire a little more," Garnett said. "The court said to the administration, 'Fine, you're working on writing an exemption, but we're still going to keep the cases alive.'"

Tufts University reinstates Christian ministry

MEDFORD, Mass. — Student religious groups should not have to appoint leaders who do not share their beliefs, a student judiciary at Tufts University announced Dec. 5.

Like several other private colleges, Tufts has an "all comers" policy that requires official student organizations to be open to all students for both membership and leadership, regardless of beliefs. But in reviewing a discrimination complaint filed against Tufts Christian Fellowship (TCF), the largest evangelical group on the campus, the Tufts Committee on Student Life decided unanimously the policy should not apply to leaders of religious groups.

"It is reasonable to expect that leaders within individual [religious groups] be exemplars of that particular religion," the committee ruled. "Therefore, an 'all comers' policy for group leadership may not be appropriate for all [religious groups]."

Now religious groups must remain open to all students for membership but can use doctrinal statements when selecting leaders.

Fewer states using capital punishment in US

WASHINGTON — Though the number of death-row inmates executed in 2012 remained unchanged from 2011, death penalty opponents said the year still showed capital punishment is on the wane.

Connecticut this year upped the number of states to repeal the death penalty to 17. Some states that have had relatively high numbers of executions in the past executed no one this year, or issued no new death sentences.

"In 2012 fewer states have the death penalty, fewer carried out executions, and death sentences and executions were clustered in a small number of states. It is very likely that more states will take up the question of death penalty repeal in the years ahead," said Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

Last year, 13 states used the death penalty.

