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By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Photo courtesy of FBC Dothan

FBC Dothan in Columbia Baptist Association transfers the deed of a church building and property to St. James Baptist Church, Dothan, which was in need of a new place.

FBC Dothan transfers deed of property to St. James

They didn't have to but First Baptist Church, Dothan, decided to give it away.

The Columbia Baptist Association church transferred the deed of a church building and property to St. James Baptist Church, Dothan, which was in need of a place to call "home."

First, Dothan, planted South Lena Baptist Church that met in the building located at 511 South Lena Street in Dothan. The land and building was owned by First, Dothan, but South Lena Baptist started meeting there in the 1960s.

St. James Baptist, an African-American Columbia Association church, began sharing the same building with South Lena in 2009, according to Mike Golson, associate pastor of family ministries at First, Dothan.

But when South Lena's Pastor Don Falgout passed away Feb. 5, 2012, the congregation decided it was best to disband. That meant First, Dothan, had to decide what to do with the building and property.

First, Dothan, formed a study group to determine the best course of action, Golson said. At the same time, St.

James' leadership (including Pastor Albert Williams) began praying and fasting about the church's ministry in the future and where the church would meet.

'Free and clear'

After several meetings between the two churches, First, Dothan's study group (and members) unanimously decided to transfer the deed "free and clear" to St. James.

Williams believed "the Spirit had His way in [the meetings]" and said, "It's a blessing to us to have our own identity now. It's like someone renting an apartment for a while and then buying (his or her) first house. It's a foundational (and) groundbreaking moment."

On Dec. 2, 2012, Jerry Grandstaff, director of missions for Columbia Association, shared a special

message with approximately 125 attendees at what is now St. James' church building. Edwin Morriss, vice chair of deacons at the time at First, Dothan, who also led the study group, shared about the process of the deed transfer decision. Attendees were "grateful, excited and emotional," Golson said.

Williams said the deed transfer process "just shows how great God is moving in (Alabama) churches. Race is not an issue. ... God does not care about race, so why should we care about race? God cares about souls being saved."

And St. James hopes to "turn the community upside down for God ... by being the light, the salt and the city on a hill" to the community, Williams said.

"We can finally call this place home." 🙏



Photo courtesy of FBC Dothan

Pictured are (l to r) Albert Williams, pastor of St. James; Sheila Falgout, widow of Don Falgout, former pastor of South Lena Baptist Church, Dothan; Johnny Fain, senior pastor of FBC Dothan; and Jerry Grandstaff, director of missions for Columbia Baptist Association.

How 'fiscal cliff' bill may affect charitable gifts

After weeks of political drama, the U.S. has averted or at least delayed the so-called "fiscal cliff."

The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 has been signed into law by the president after passing both houses of Congress. Taxpayer "relief" means that about 77 percent of U.S. households will pay higher taxes, according to Bloomberg, mostly because of the expiration of the payroll tax cut. While some provisions are still set to expire, several provisions have been made permanent.

Following is a brief summary of provisions of the act that may impact charitable giving:

The 2012 ordinary income tax rates remain intact for most taxpayers. For individuals with incomes more than \$400,000 and joint filers more than \$450,000, the federal income tax rate increased from 35 percent to 39.6 percent. The dividend and capital gains rates also increased from 15 percent to 20 percent for those filers as well.

Itemized deductions

For individuals earning above \$250,000 and joint filers above \$300,000, itemized deductions and personal exemptions are limited. Total itemized deductions are now reduced by 3 percent.

The reduction of the payroll tax in Social Security is now over. Social Security will now collect 2 percent more from our paychecks.

The estate, gift and generation-skipping tax exemptions remain at \$5 million with an annual inflation adjustment (2010 is the base year). The tax rate above the exemption amount, however, is 40 percent instead of the 2012 rate of 35 percent.

A provision with a large impact is the extension of direct charitable distributions from IRAs of up to \$100,000 by taxpayers 70 and a half or older. This stipulation allows donors to make qualifying contributions through Jan. 31 for the tax year 2012. (BP)

COMMENT

The Story Is There Is No Story

When the story broke on Dec. 11, 2012, that a counselor working for the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) had been charged with sex abuse of an adult client, there was fear the incident could result in serious fallout for the Alabama Baptist ministry. A month later it appears that Alabama Baptists and others have recognized the situation for what it is — an isolated incident.

During its 18 years of existence, Pathways Professional Counseling, the counseling arm of ABCH, has earned a well-deserved reputation for the quality of the Christian counseling it provides as well as for the quality of the counselors it employs. During the past month that general appraisal evidently helped shield the ministry from negative fallout caused by newspaper headlines.

The outstanding reputation of the counseling program is not an accident. ABCH has been determined in its efforts to employ people who are superior both individually and professionally from the very beginning. The founder of the program was Rod Marshall, who now serves as president of the ABCH organization.

Screening process

Every counselor goes through a rigorous screening program. National, state and local criminal records are checked. Fingerprints are submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Alabama Bureau of Investigation for screening. Databases for sex offenders, child abuse and neglect are checked.

Candidates also must successfully complete a battery of screenings assessing their skills, temperament, leadership style, communications style, thinking style, personal motivators and more.

Marshall said he knows of no other local agency that does a more thorough evaluation of its employees than Pathways. He recalled several candidates withdrew from consideration because the screening process was so demanding.

Each counselor also must agree to work with the core values of the ministry that note the impact of sin on individuals and that forgiveness of



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

sin is available "only through the gift of grace through Christ," among other statements.

Once employed, counselors participate in weekly staff meetings. They evaluate one another's cases while protecting client confidentiality. They participate in continuing education programs. All is designed to provide clients with the best counseling possible.

Marshall said even the partnerships with Baptist associations are designed to enhance the positive reputation of the counseling program. Each of the 35 Baptist associations now partnering with Pathways is required to offer a place for the counseling where there is a window in the door to the office that allows one to see what is going on inside at any time. Also, no client must ever be alone in the building with a counselor. That is a protection for the client as well as the counselor, Marshall pointed out.

Alabama Baptists can be assured that ABCH goes to great lengths to discourage and prevent charges like the Dec. 11 incident from ever occurring because one charge is one too many.

Still, to engage in ministry is to make oneself or one's church or organization vulnerable. Unfortunately no matter how hard one tries to avoid them, misunderstandings and mistakes still happen.

Today, Pathways Professional Counseling has 18 counselors, most of them full-time. In 2012 more than 3,000 individuals were seen by Pathways counselors. Most of these were referred by Baptist pastors.

One reason Pathways receives so many referrals is its fee base. Clients are charged based on their ability to pay. The average per-hour charge is only a fraction of the fair market value of counseling in the Birmingham area, which ranges between \$90 and \$110 per hour. And while most clients pay something for the help they receive, counseling fees do not generate enough funds to cover the \$1.3 million budget of Pathways. The program is supplemented by funds from Alabama Baptist churches and other sources.

Another reason for the referrals is the expertise of the counselors themselves. Nonprofit entities in Alabama do not have to have licensed professional counselors to do counseling in the state.

However, Pathways uses only credentialed and licensed or license-eligible counselors. Again this is a purposeful decision designed to increase the credibility of the counseling provided by Pathways. Currently 14 of the 18 counselors are professional licensed counselors. The others are in the process of obtaining their licenses.

Marshall said ABCH has more registered play therapists than any other entity in the state. This results in referrals from doctors, schools, lawyers and judges as well as pastors. "They know we are well trained and well equipped," Marshall said during a recent interview.

Officials estimated that children, adolescent, adult and family counseling each totaled about 25 percent of the counseling provided by Pathways during 2012. The wide range of expertise provides Baptist pastors with great resources for their members.

ABCH is trying to learn from the Dec. 11 experience. They are working with outside authorities as well as with internal teams to review their policies and procedures from recruitment to internal supervision. They cooperated with civil authorities and have been forthright in providing information about the situation for Alabama Baptists.

The incident that initiated this review is unfortunate but it does not detract from the confidence Alabama Baptists have in ABCH and Pathways Professional Counseling. Pathways remains a professional, Christian ministry providing counseling that brings hope and healing to individuals and families. It remains a great resource for Baptists of Alabama as well as a ministry worthy of support through prayers and the pocketbook.

Pathways Professional Counseling

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pathwaysprofessional.org

Letters to the Editor

FIRST AMENDMENT

Religious freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. This is actually the first statement of the First Amendment, which promises freedom of religion, press, assembly and petition. We cannot miss the significance of this opening principle of what we know as the Bill of Rights. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. These words provide the cornerstone, the

foundation, of the definition of being a free people.

Contemporary culture and even government on local, state and national levels seem to come close to neglecting the phrase, "the free exercise thereof." Oftentimes free citizens are asked or even commanded not to use words such as Jesus Christ. Free, Christian-based institutions are in danger of being forced to follow the dictates of government policy that directly cut across their Christian val-

ues. Yet the U.S. Constitution speaks of religious freedom with these words, "the free exercise thereof." I must ask, whatever happened to the free exercise thereof?

Baptists were influential and instrumental in securing the principle of religious liberty. We must provide contemporary and resolute leadership for preserving and maintaining religious freedom.

Ray Stonecypher
Ardmore, Ala.



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

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Photos by Carlos Lemus and Charles Dale

The Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute in Indian Springs, an extension of Instituto Biblico Bautista Hispano (Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute) in Louisville, Ky., graduates its first class of Superior Diploma students at FBC Indian Springs on Dec. 1, 2012.

Hispanic Bible Institute graduates first Superior Diploma students

By Kristen Padilla
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

December 1 marked a milestone in Hispanic Baptist work in central Alabama. The Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute in Indian Springs, an extension of Instituto Biblico Bautista Hispano (Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute) in Louisville, Ky., graduated its first class of Superior Diploma students at First Baptist Church, Indian Springs.

When the institute opened its doors in 2010, at that time meeting at First Baptist Church, Hoover, 17 students enrolled and completed a first-year certificate of ministry. Three years later, 11 of these 17 students have completed the entire three-year program and are ready for gospel ministry.

"The students we have, even before they finished their third year, were talking about what God was doing in their lives. Several of them, when they graduated this time, asked for a place to serve," said Cary Hanks, catalytic missionary for the Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic Ministry Coalition. "That really meant a lot to me."

Hanks, who also serves as the coordinator for the institute's extension in Alabama, was one of the men who helped bring the institute there. "The institute is strategic to Baptist work among Hispanics in the future," he said. "If we don't have trained leadership, it's going to be hard to have strong leadership in the future."

"We are preparing missionaries to go back to their home countries," Hanks added. "Some of the men have said to me, 'If I go back, I'm going to start a church in my hometown.' We are having an international impact as well as a national impact here in Alabama."

Although the 11 graduates signify a dream coming to fruition for many Hispanic Baptist leaders in central Alabama, it poses a new problem.

"One of the pastors who has also been a student with us was telling us that one of his church members who graduated with him said he feels called to full-time ministry," Hanks said. "But we just don't have the churches open for positions to be filled. We need new churches."

There is work for at least three students who graduated with the Superior Diploma. Carlos

Lemus, Hispanic missionary for Autauga and Chilton Baptist associations, plans to make these three students associate pastors at his churches in Chilton and Autauga counties. He also plans to open another church in Chilton County, where he hopes a student still in the program will eventually serve as pastor.

Equipped to be effective

Healthy churches need well-trained leaders, both clergy and lay, said Byron Mosquera, pastor of the Hispanic congregation at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.

"Some of [the students] are going to be able to lead small congregations as pastors or elders, or they're going to support the churches that exist," said Mosquera, who serves on faculty at the institute. "They are very equipped ... to be more effective people in doing what they need to be doing in local churches."

The fact that students have completed each of the three years is a great accomplishment

in light of the odds against them, Lemus said. Some difficulties include poverty, distance to the institute and little to no previous education. But in Lemus' associations, he has seen churches and associations help students by offering scholarships for tuition.

"We thank God most of the students have some kind of support from some kind of church or institution," Lemus said. "We hope the churches can see the potential and help us develop leaders in the Hispanic community."

The institute is a ministry of the Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic Ministry Coalition and currently runs on the support of students' tuition. Faculty members consist of Hispanic pastors and leaders like Hanks, who volunteer their time.

"We do it because we want to see more churches planted and more churches grow," Hanks said.

For more information, contact Hanks at 205-602-0082 or cary.cabhmc@hotmail.com. ■

FBC Indian Springs embraces institute

When First Baptist Church, Indian Springs, was approached about being the host facility for the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute, it embraced the opportunity.

"The interim pastor, Dr. Buddy McGohon, knew of the institute's need for a new home," said Charlie Dale, pastor of First, Indian Springs, who came to the church in June 2012. "He asked the ... church leadership team, and they approved of it. It's really a desire to make disciples of all nations. We know that these Hispanic church leaders are in a better position than we are to reach Alabama Hispanics with the truth. We want to be a part of Southern Baptist efforts to strengthen Hispanic churches."

The reason for the move from First Baptist Church, Hoover, to First, Indian Springs, was convenience, said Cary Hanks, catalytic missionary for the Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic Ministry Coalition.

"It put us in a more centralized location," Hanks said.

But Indian Springs has provided more than a facility and location — the church has built a partnership with the faculty and students of the institute.

When Dale was being interviewed by First, Indian Springs, he was impressed by the church's willingness to host the institute.

Mission priority

"The fact that Indian Springs First Baptist Church was hosting the institute told me that this was a church that was more concerned about the Great Commission than they were with preserving their buildings or hoarding their resources," he said. "I was excited to come lead a church like that."

"I felt that I was coming to a church that didn't care what the prevailing culture said about Hispanics; they were going to be true to our biblical mandate to reach the nations and love the sojourners," Dale said.

(Kristen Padilla)



Photo by David Pearce

Though a memorial in Prague to John Huss and other martyrs keeps their legacy before Czechs, few know or care about their country's long heritage of devout faith.

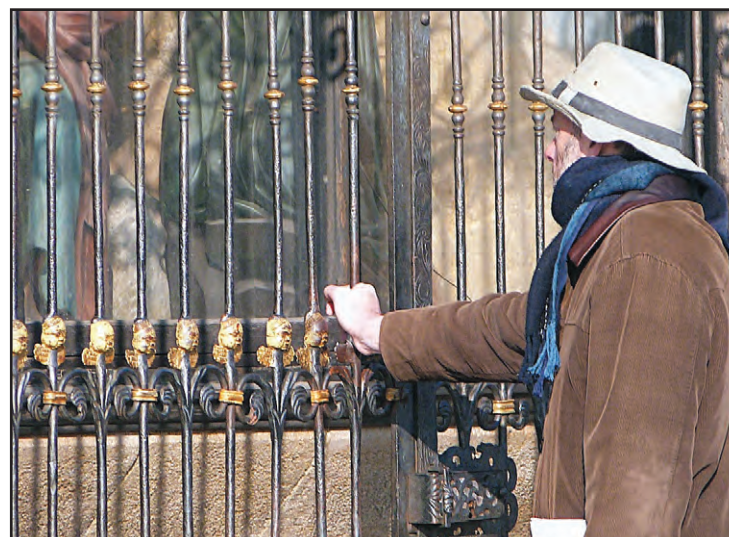


Photo by Kate Ryan

A passerby pauses to touch a worn-down angel on the iron gate of a church in Plzen, Czech Republic. For centuries Czechs have touched statues to offer up wishes or prayers.

Statue rubbing in atheistic Czech Republic

Larry and Melissa Lewis stood in Plzen's town square and watched the woman walk right toward them. Just as they thought she might speak, she brushed past to take hold of the iron gate.

She reached out, paused briefly at a row of golden angels and turned to walk away. The angel she had touched had no face, worn down from years of being touched by passersby.

The Lewises, who serve as Christian workers in the Czech Republic, said they see this all the time, and it's a sign that Eastern Europe is a lot more open to spiritual things than most people think.

"Legend has it that in 1500 the executioner was not allowed into the church," Larry Lewis said. "His unholiness kept him out of the building, but he could stand in the front and pray. Each Sunday he would come and kneel by the fence."

When the executioner finished praying, he would pull himself up by grabbing the angel knob. Because of that gesture, whatever he touched was considered lucky, Larry Lewis said. Citizens of the town began to come to

touch the angel and make a wish.

Melissa Lewis said it's a telling tradition.

"I sat at the square yesterday waiting for a friend and watched a never-ending stream of people who stopped to touch the angel and make a wish or (say) a prayer," she said. "It really made me realize that in a country that claims to be atheistic, there are a lot of people who are searching."

Detached emotions

And, she said, they do not know what an atheist is. When they touch, they pray to something or someone, but it's hard to know much about what they are thinking, she said.

"Czechs embody a heritage of detached emotions. They have emotion but do not show it. Even with family members, they keep it inside," Melissa Lewis said.

The Lewises attribute this behavior to a history filled with religious persecution and war. The Czechs have continually been conquered and oppressed, they said.

"Czechs are coming from ground zero. They do not know about Adam and Eve," Melissa Lewis said. "As a whole they do not believe in God and they are afraid to talk

Once on front line of Reformation, Czechs now detached from legacy of John Huss,

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

He was burned at the stake by the church, quoting Psalms as the flames engulfed his body.

And he lit a fire in the church that still burns today. It started in his country and spread outward.

But as people mill about his imposing memorial statue today in Prague's Old Town Square, many of them have no idea who John Huss is.

Huss is part of a "great legacy of faith" in the Czech Republic, said Mark Edworthy, a Southern Baptist regional leader based in Prague. "The country annually celebrates the martyrdom days of John Huss and King Wenceslas, from the Christmas carol."

Both were killed for their faith, Edworthy said.

"But when I ask Czechs who these men were and how or why they were killed, I get blank stares or general answers like, 'I think he was a priest or king or someone,'" he said.

A priest Huss was — at least until he was stripped of his priestly garb piece by piece on the way to the stake.

He became a priest not for noble or spiritual reasons but simply to escape poverty.

He died stripped of his priesthood because

of his devotion to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.

Thanks to the writings of John Wycliffe, Huss went from a complacent comfort-seeker to a man clinging to truth, "desiring to hold, believe and assert whatever is contained in [the Bible] as long as I have breath in me."

Czechs rallied around the Scriptures with Huss, simply wanting to put the Bible at the center as he did. But it soon became a political issue, and before long Huss' ideas pitted him against the pope and the king, who were rolling in the wealth of indulgences paid to the church.

Huss was burned at the stake, his ashes thrown in a lake. But that wasn't the end of his influence on the church. His people were furious and stuck to their guns. They faced three military attacks over the next few years and, even after compromising with the Catholic church, continued to influence change.

A century later, Martin Luther dusted off a book of sermons and found a new hero in Huss, his ideas and his commitment.

The Reformation was born.

But many Czechs neither know nor care about it, Edworthy said.

"Evangelicals comprise far less than 1 percent of the population, so Huss' spiritual legacy is not very strong. As stated, most Czechs

don't really know his story or that he was an inspiration to Luther 100 years later," he said.

And even if they do know his story, the "tragic paradox" is that they remember him not for his faith but for the deeds his faith energized, said Preston Pearce, a Southern Baptist representative who serves with his wife, Karen, in Prague. They think of him as "a revolutionary against established power," he said.

A Hussite church still exists in Prague, but "unfortunately it is quite dead," Karen Pearce said. "This is a sad legacy to the man."

A movement crushed

The story of the other figures immortalized on the Huss monument in Prague is telling also, Preston Pearce said. He explained that they represent the 27 evangelical leaders executed on that spot in 1621 after the Battle of White Mountain, in which a largely Protestant Czech army was crushed by the combined

forces of the Catholic Holy Roman Empire, the German Catholic League and others.

After that, "the evangelical movement suffered greatly and most either recanted, fled or were killed," he said. "In my opinion, this forced re-catholicization is the reason for Czechs' entrenched atheism today."

Edworthy said Czechs "often know of a general Catholic heritage, but the very brutal wars between Catholics and Protestants following the Reformation have tainted the role of religion."

Religion was watered down even more by communism's 40 years of propaganda, he said, so the biggest challenge now is their indifference.

"They are not strongly committed to their position of atheism but are generally uninterested in an evangelical position," Edworthy said.

They are biblically and spiritually illiterate, he said — a tragic reality after Huss' sacrifice

"We can see much evidence that the spiritual climate is changing slowly but surely."

Karen Pearce

Spiritual search

reveals spiritual search, Christian workers say

about what they believe.”

A woman once told Melissa Lewis, “I don’t believe God exists, but I pray to Him. Do you think that makes Him mad?”

“It is a contradiction,” Melissa Lewis said of the woman’s tradition.

Larry Lewis said the attitudes stem from communism. “Under communism, you were looked down on if you attended church,” he said. “All important things were taken away, so they held on to the peripheral.”

Czechs need a Savior, but they reach out to superstition, he said.

And it doesn’t just happen in Plzen. In Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, a constant line of people waits to touch a famous statue on the Charles Bridge.

When actions become ritual, Melissa Lewis said, it’s hard to get them to change.

“Breaking with past traditions is no easy task,” she said. “Explaining the folly of such customs is even harder. Statue rubbing is a part of who they are. This custom is imbedded in their hearts.”

She said the life of her friend Milena showed her just how much that tradition can linger.

“Milena came to faith and was baptized in May, yet she still has a tendency to go back to the angel,” Melissa Lewis said. “She has a true understanding of who God is. She knows He died for her.”

But Milena has a lingering belief that touching the angel is the same as praying to the Father, Melissa Lewis said. “My prayer is that Milena and the Czech people would learn they do not have to touch an angel. They can reach out to God from anywhere and know He is there.”

Larry and Melissa Lewis said they have been trying to peel away the layers of false belief as they share that Jesus is a real deity who can hear, see and know them intimately. They tell Czechs that no matter how many times you call on Jesus’ name, it will not be erased over time like the angel’s head.

Czechs have responded and come to faith because of the Lewises’ witness. They ask for prayer as they seek to etch the story of Jesus on the hearts and minds of the people of the Czech Republic.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names have been changed for security reasons. (IMB)

other heroes of spiritual ‘braveness’

to defend the authority and centrality of Scripture in one’s relationship with God.

“They rarely can make distinctions between Catholics and Evangelicals,” Edworthy said.

“They also have the postmodern orientation where truth can be relative. They could easily say about someone’s faith, ‘That is really nice for him,’ but see no disconnect with their own faithless walk.”

But Karen Pearce said Christian workers in Prague are starting to see a marked difference in the openness of Czechs to the gospel.

“Czechs are not actively searching for spiritual truth per se right now — they are very secular and self-satisfied,” she said. “However, we ... have seen a definite change in the past three to five years as far as openness. We can see much evidence that the spiritual climate is changing slowly but surely through the persistent prayer, witness and faithfulness on the part of God’s people who labor in this country.”

They are seeing Czechs get saved and baptized “somewhat regularly,” she said, noting that it used to be “virtually unheard of.”

“We praise God for that,” Karen Pearce said.

And most Baptist churches in the Czech Republic — as well as Protestant and evangelical churches in general — exercise and

appreciate the freedoms Huss championed, said Keith Jones, rector of International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague.

“Czech Baptists certainly feel a strong affinity with John Huss and his proto-reformation — communion of both kinds, use of the vernacular in worship, the sense of a believing community not suffocated by heavy, clerical leadership,” Jones said.

‘Distant father figure’

They see Huss as a “distant father figure,” he said. “Many Czech free, Protestant, believing church groups ... use the chalice as a symbol on their buildings and in their logos, harking back to the Wycliffe/Hussite era.”

But Czech Baptists don’t have any direct connection to Huss, said Milan Kern, president of the Czech Baptist Union.

“The Baptist church in the Czech Republic doesn’t have any link with the Hussite church and doesn’t feel influenced by John Huss,” Kern said.

But, he said, Huss is “a symbol for many Czechs as a man who dared to criticize publicly evil things in the Roman Catholic Church,” for example, the immorality of priests. “In his braveness, he is an example for Baptists,” Kern said. (Some historical facts compiled from *Christianity Today*)



Photo courtesy of Gary Cambron

IMPACTING YOUTH — Boy Scout Troop 404 of FBC Pelham meets for a Sunday morning service at Camp Sequoyah near Cheaha State Park in Delta.

Scouting proves to be ‘tremendous evangelism, church growth tool’

If your church was offered an opportunity to have weekly life-on-life contact with both church and unchurched youth — social activities, opportunities to discuss the important things in life, service projects in the community — what would you say?

The churches that are hosting Boy Scout troops are saying “yes,” according to R. Chip Turner. Turner is the former president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting, a group that tries to connect and encourage Baptist churches who host Boy Scout troops.

Scouting “offers opportunities for kids to be involved in something wholesome and neighborhood-based,” Turner said. The Scout Oath involves piety, patriotism, helpfulness and proper care for oneself — qualities that make for a healthy individual if nothing else. Hosting a Scout troop is “a great way of demonstrating the church’s love for the community,” he added.

But even more than that, Scouting is “a tremendous evangelism and church growth tool,” Turner said. The average unit may be 60 percent unchurched or un-Christian, which demonstrates the attraction Scouting can have for nonbelievers. The unique activities and community Scout troops provide can draw in people who otherwise would not be interested in church.

Turner described the impact Scouting had on a church in central Louisiana to which he belonged at one time. The church started a Boy Scout troop in 1921 and a Cub Scout pack (for age 7 to 10) while Turner was with the church. After a few years Turner decided to see if he could find out how many people had joined the church after getting involved with Cub Scouts.

It turned out that in about four years, 300 people joined the church whose initial contact had been through the Cub Scout pack, Turner said.

Scouting has had a positive impact on

First Baptist Church, Pelham, as well. Pastor Mike Shaw reported that First, Pelham, has had “some excellent members” come in through Scouting. The Scouts also donate a tithe of the proceeds from their Christmas tree sale each year to the church missions fund, he said.

Gary Cambron, Scoutmaster of First, Pelham’s, Boy Scout troop, said they “try to use [Scouts] as a vehicle for ministry.”

“We don’t discriminate against anyone, but we try to promote a positive and Christian program,” Cambron said. He added that the troop encourages boys who have service projects to do to look first to the church, the troop’s charter organization.

A ministry

Turner said thinking of a Scout troop as a ministry is the best way to undertake it.

“From a technical sense it takes next to nothing to start one,” he said — the only thing a chartering organization requires is a place to meet. But if a church takes an active part in providing leadership for a Scout troop, they will be able to have a much richer impact on it, he said. Turner recommended that the church provide as many of the troop’s key leaders as possible.

“There are highly skilled people who have never found the best place to serve in the church, and this might be it,” he said. People who love the outdoors and care to connect with and mentor youth are perfect for Scouting ministry.

And if a church can promote Scouting within itself — holding a Scout-led Sunday service once a year, for example — it can greatly encourage the boys who participate, Turner added.

The state of Alabama is divided into five councils that oversee Scout troops. For more information on starting a Scout troop, email Brent Pritchard, director of field service for the Greater Alabama Council, at bpritchard@1bsa.org or call 205-969-4248. (Joseph Rhea)

Across Alabama's Associations

BESSEMER

► J.O.Y., the senior fellowship of **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will celebrate its seventh anniversary Jan. 22, 11 a.m. Frank Jones will be the special guest. Bill McCall is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a third Sunday night singing Jan. 20, 6 p.m. with Buck Smith and the Royal Masters from Bessemer. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Calvary Church, Enterprise**, will host evangelist Don Graham Feb. 3-6. Graham will preach on Isaiah 53. Sunday service times will be 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. For information call 334-894-6216. Kerry Mitchell is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Wendell W. Ray** is the new director of missions for **Escambia Association**. He will begin Jan. 21. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in religion from Auburn University and a master of divinity degree and a doctor of ministry degree in preaching from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He has served as director of church and missions development at Covington Association and also previously served as pastor of several churches in-



RAY

cluding First Church, Gulf Breeze, Fla., and First Church, Murray, Ky. He and his wife, Melissa, have two children.

FRIENDSHIP

► **Bill Evans**, pastor of **Hopewell Church, Pinson**, received his doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Seminary on Dec. 15, 2012.

HALE

► **Mount Hebron Church, Akron**, will hold The Portrait-Missions Project on Jan. 24. Portraits of Mount Hebron church members painted by Tana Thomas will be on display in the fellowship hall, noon-6 p.m. Members may receive their portraits by making a donation to a Baptist missions project of their choice and will take their portrait at the end of the event. A fellowship meal will be served at noon. Ralph Thomas is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► The North Alabama Center of New Orleans Seminary will hold classes for Term III on Thursdays, Jan. 24-March 14 at **First Church, Athens**. Bible Teaching Certificate class, 6-8 p.m., will be "Introduction to OT: The Prophets" taught by David O. Cofield, pastor of CrossRoads Church, Rogersville. No prior approval is required to attend. For information call 256-247-6336, email nab@fbcathens.org or visit www.fbcathens.org and click under ministry. Edwin Jenkins is pastor of First, Athens.

MUD CREEK

► **Paul S. Hicks** is the new pastor of **West Jefferson Church**. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, a master's degree from Beeson Divinity School at Samford

and a doctor of ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as the associate pastor of North Gardendale Church, Gardendale. He also has served as pastor of First Church, Irondale; Northside Church, Cumming; and Westside Church, Warrior. He and his wife, Christy, have two children.



HICKS

SAND MOUNTAIN

► **Terry Gant** is the new pastor of **Pisgah Church**. A native of Pisgah, Gant holds an associate degree in sacred literature, a bachelor's degree in ministry and a master's degree in pastoral studies from Covington Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Ga., and a doctorate in theology from Slidell Seminary in Slidell, La. He previously served as pastor of Talking Rock Creek Chapel, Chatsworth, Ga. He and his wife, Marti, have two children.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Mount Olive Church, Coker**, will hold "MANCHURCH" on Jan. 26. A lunch will be at 1 p.m. followed by the All Pro Dad Simulcast with Tony Dungy. For information call 205-339-2529. Tim Tindle is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Chewacla Church, Opelika**, will host Bill King on Jan. 20. He will preach at 11 a.m. and appear as Brother Billy Bob Bohannon at 6:30 p.m. Aaron Pruitt is pastor.

Alabamians receive seminary degrees

A number of Alabama Baptists graduated from Southern Baptist seminaries and Alabama Baptists' divinity school with degrees at the master's level or above during the fall 2012 semester. Their names, hometowns and degrees were provided by their schools.

► Beeson Divinity School, Samford University:

Doctor of Ministry — Mark Edward Allison, Gardendale; Aaron Russell Baldrige, Columbus, Ga.; Scott Christopher Hohn, Livingston; William Dexter Hughes, Paducah, Ky.; David Christopher Mauldin, Mobile; Donald R. Omalley, Hayesville, N.C.; Robert Roger Peadro, Sullivan, Ill.

Master of Divinity — Nathan Roland Carroll, Oneonta; Kyle Michael Clark, Chillicothe, Ill.; Nathan Lynn Cobb, Myrtle, Miss.; Gabriel Carlos Estrada, Redlands, Calif.; Carol A. Griggs, Memphis,

Tenn.; Rebecca Whitten Poe Hays, Helena; William Joshua Hays, Helena; Andrew Joel Johnson, Hendersonville, Tenn.; John Alford Lambuth, Jackson, Miss.; Moses Lafayette Lartey, Thomasville; Zachary Max McCain, Murfreesboro, Tenn.; Andrew Dennis Phillips, Snellville, Ga.; Joseph Richard Rhea, Tupelo, Miss.; James Alan Tidmore, Birmingham; Brian Patrick Westbrook, Bluff Park; David Anthony Wickiser, Birmingham

► Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Divinity — Jon David Jackson, Birmingham; Jon English Lee, Montgomery; Nicholas James Lynch, Arab; Adam Kenyon Rice, Thomasville; Edward James Waldron III, Birmingham

► New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Ministry — Bill Ev-

ans, Pinson; Jon Hathcock, Tuscaloosa

Master of Divinity — Cleve Mallory, Prattville; Matthew Kamper, Leeds

Master of Arts in Missiology — Candis Flynn, Florence

► Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Education — Timothy M. Howard, Mobile

Master of Divinity — George Alan Bryan Jr., Headland; William Tyler Krug, Birmingham

Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling — Clifford J. Moore, Blountsville

► Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work — Linda Patricia Jernigan, Greenville

Master of Divinity — Raymond Lee Colley Jr., Wetumpka; Evan Webster, Decatur (TAB)

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

BCM leader Bonds to serve with IMB in Brazil

Brantley Bonds has served in some form of Alabama Baptist campus ministry since 1999, and now he and his wife, Allison, will take their love of sharing the gospel and pouring into people's lives to the missions field of Brazil.

Bonds started serving as an intern at the University of Alabama in 1999 and then became a state missionary with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) in 2001. He was the associate campus minister at the University of South Alabama from 2001 to 2006 and then at Auburn University and Southern Union State Community College (Opelika campus) until Dec. 31, 2012.

Bonds, who holds a bachelor of arts degree from Auburn and a master of divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, said campus ministries "had a huge impact" on his life as a student and he "sensed the Lord directing ... into collegiate ministries."

But now, after years of serving college students and "loving it," Bonds senses the same strong calling to international missions, he said.

"God would have to call us to leave [campus ministries] because I love it so much," Bonds said. "But we want to obey. [Allison] and I both felt the Lord stirring our hearts (for international missions)."

The Bonds will serve as missionary apprentices with the International Mission Board, leaving for Brazil this spring. When they arrive, they will take language courses for a period of time. Their main task will then be to mentor people groups in "very rural areas ... out in the Amazon jungle," Bonds said.

Mike Nuss, director of the SBOM office of collegiate and student ministries, said Bonds has a "deep, deep love for students" and "a strong desire to see them come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

And Nuss said the prayers of campus ministers, state missionaries and hundreds of students "go with [the Bonds]" as they travel overseas.

"Brant and Allison are clearly following God's call on their lives to missions service in Brazil," Nuss continued. "(Now) Brant has the unique experience of actually doing what he's been challenging students to do — answer God's call to missions service."

Bonds emphasized the importance and blessing of the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. He also noted Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections and said he looks forward to partnering with Alabama Baptists once he and his family are serving in Brazil. (Neisha Fuson)



BONDS

Ukraine church gives to Alabama tornado victims

For years, Alabama Baptists heard about how their partnership with churches in Ukraine was helping Baptists there spread the gospel.

But Sam Day, director of missions for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, said he wanted everyone to see the depth of the gift that came back across the ocean to Alabama.

After tornados hit the state, the churches in Ukraine prayed and fasted.

"One church held 24-hour prayer vigils," Day said. "Their church opened as a prayer center."

They also took up an offering for Forest Lake Baptist Church and Alberta Baptist Church, both in Tuscaloosa and both damaged by the tornados.

"It was a beautiful picture of 2 Corinthians 8 where the church in Macedonia, poor as they were, gave out of the little that they had to the churches in Jerusalem," Day said.

In that passage, in the Macedonian churches' "severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme joy" overflowed in generous giving.

The Ukrainians' generosity likewise is "a beautiful illustration of brotherly love," Day said. (TAB)

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A 'biblical, rational, dependable' plan

Alabama Baptist GIVING

DECEMBER 2012

Cooperative Program Total Budget Goal \$3,641,666
Cooperative Program Total Budget Gifts \$3,248,198
Under Goal for Month \$393,468

YEAR END GIVING FOR 2012

Cooperative Program Total Budget Goal \$43,700,000
Cooperative Program Total Budget Gifts \$40,748,377
Under Goal for Year \$2,951,623



The total given monthly and year to date gifts include CP base, CP state causes and SBC causes.

Majority think 'God still desires to use CP-funded missions,' LifeWay survey shows

By Roger S. Oldham
SBC LIFE

Southern Baptists are putting their Cooperative Program (CP) treasure where their missional heart is, according to the most recent CP survey conducted by LifeWay Research.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was created to elicit, combine and direct the energies of Baptists "for the propagation of the gospel," as noted in the SBC's 1845 charter. The convention's formal purpose, meanwhile, is the "promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad," according to its constitution.

And the convention has embraced a missional vision to "present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world and to make disciples of all the nations," stemming from messengers' approval of the final report of the Great Commission Task Force of the SBC in 2010.

To help accomplish these goals, the convention adopted a program of cooperative giving we today call the CP.

The CP is the means by which Southern Baptists work together to provide financial support for the missions and ministries in their respective states, across the nation and around the world.

For 87 years, the CP has provided Southern Baptists a cooperative means to fulfill a missional vision of building what Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, calls "A Strong Home Base with an Aggressive Global Vision!"

In cooperation with CP-funded state convention ministries and the SBC ministries of the North American Mission Board, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and the six SBC seminaries, local churches seek to establish a strong home base.

In partnership

In partnership with the CP-funded SBC International Mission Board and state convention overseas partnerships, local churches champion an aggressive global vision.

Formation of the SBC provided new opportunities to engage in an aggressive vision of missions and evangelism. It also created new challenges. These new SBC ministries drew their support from the same churches that provided funds for state ministries. Soon representatives from all of these ministries flooded the churches with financial appeals.

The outcome of this "direct-appeal" approach was less than ideal. More visible ministries received larger offerings while

other important ministries suffered in want. Support for all ministries was unpredictable from one year to the next.

Church and ministry leaders were frustrated with the time, effort and money it took to generate a never-sufficient financial base.

In 1923, the convention commissioned the "Committee on Future Program" to come up with a solution.

The committee wanted a plan that was biblical — one that would incorporate both storehouse tithing and special offerings; rational — one that would address all essentials of ministry in proper proportion; and dependable — one that would provide consistent, equitable support for the ministries Baptists deemed essential in their respective states and in the SBC.

Two years later, when Southern Baptists gathered in Memphis, Tenn., for their annual meeting, the committee introduced a plan they believed would be coordinated and fruitful. Their proposal utilized the biblical ideals of obedient giving, on a regular basis, in proportion to one's blessing from God (1 Cor. 16:2). They called it the "Co-Operative Program of Southern Baptists."

The design of the CP is remarkably simple:

- ▶ Churches pray over and approve their annual budgets based on anticipated tithes and offerings from their members.

- ▶ Cooperating churches prayerfully commit to give a percentage of their undesignated receipts through the CP.

- ▶ That percentage is sent to the state convention on a monthly basis and becomes the basis of the state convention's ministry budget.

- ▶ Each cooperating state convention prayerfully commits to send a portion of its CP contributions to the SBC for distribution to the convention's missions and ministries.

- ▶ The SBC determines an appropriate allocation for each of its approved ministries, following a model of prayerful reflection and messenger approval.

The original plan called for states to deduct the costs of promoting the CP, with a goal of forwarding 50 percent of the remainder to the SBC for its missions and ministries.

During that first year, cooperating churches contributed an average of nearly 11 percent of their undesignated contributions to this new, integrated plan for supporting convention missions and minis-

tries. This level of response continued for more than 60 years.

During this same 60-year period, the SBC portion of the CP forwarded from the states fluctuated between a low of 26 percent during the Great Depression to a high of 39 percent in 1989. Following a slow decline through the 1990s, the percentage forwarded by the states began rising steadily in 2002 and now stands again at nearly 39 percent.

As the new LifeWay Research survey shows, Southern Baptist pastors who are 55 and older are more likely to support the CP, believing the CP supports missions and ministries their churches value. They also are more likely to think convention entities use their CP contributions effectively and to place a higher value on the ministries the CP supports.

Younger pastors (age 18–44) are less likely to believe the convention's entities use their CP contributions effectively and are less willing to agree that the CP supports SBC ministries and missions their churches value.

Increasing ethnic support

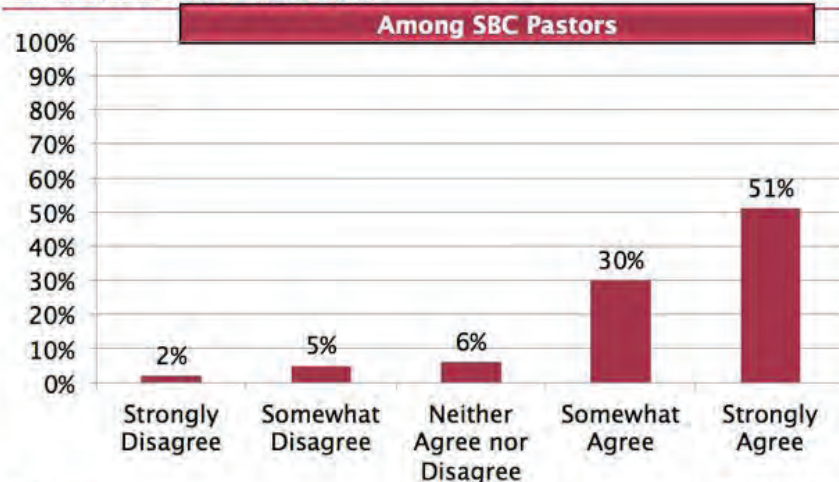
Over the past two decades, Southern Baptists' greatest growth has been among ethnic congregations. Many of these newer churches are unacquainted with the history, value and successes of the CP. As they become more fully informed about the missional impetus behind the CP, their support for the CP is increasing.

Over the past two and a half decades, the average percentage forwarded from the churches through the CP has declined by almost one half — from 10.52 percent in 1987 to 5.41 percent in 2011.

Messengers from cooperating churches must join SBC entity leaders by thinking about the question, "Does there come a point at which we can no longer count on the CP as a dependable source of funding for our collective Kingdom ministries?"

Convention leadership at every level must continually take strides to build the trust that is the glue that holds the convention's missions and ministry enterprises together. The LifeWay Research survey is encouraging in that it shows the majority believe that God still desires to use CP-funded missions and ministries. The survey is instructive in that it reminds us that trust must be earned from one generation to the next to maintain an Aggressive Global Vision for presenting the gospel. (BP)

Over 80% agree the CP fuels an aggressive enterprise of reaching UPG around the world.



6% Don't Know

Q: "The Cooperative Program fuels an aggressive global enterprise of reaching the unreached people groups around the world." n=1009

LifeWay
RESEARCH
Biblical Solutions for Life

Rely on God's strength

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist



Photo courtesy of Roy Sanford

The Howell family, consisting of (clockwise from left) Laci and Angela, Billy, Meagan and Hannah Grace, celebrate together April 8, 2008, the day of Laci's birth.

Northport mother sees God work miracles after suffering acute ischemic stroke

Angela Howell once said that when she got better, she wanted to tell her story as a witness to God's wonderful work.

That time would eventually come.

Following an uphill recovery that entailed relearning how to walk, speak, read and write after an unexpected, life-threatening medical scare, Howell has since had opportunities to share her powerful testimony at several Alabama Baptist churches. It's a testimony that includes, among other things, a "miracle baby."

It all started one October day in 2007. The day began just like any other for Howell at her job in Tuscaloosa's DCH Medical Tower. She planned to meet her husband, Billy, and their daughters Meagan and Hannah Grace — both out of school on a fall break — for lunch that afternoon.

It wasn't yet noon, and she sat down for a moment to rest her chin in her hand. It was at that moment that her hand went limp. When she tried to stand up and walk, her legs went limp as well. "My balance was really disoriented," she recalled. The doctor Howell worked for at the time spotted her struggling, and she was whisked off for an MRI.

It was determined Angela Howell had experienced an acute ischemic stroke. A large blood clot was preventing blood flow to her brain.

"I was very, very scared," she said. "The only thing I knew to do was to cling to Jesus and pray, and that's what I did."

She is able to recall these initial memories, and she also remembers the later weeks of rehabilitation. But she doesn't remember much from "the middle" of her unexpected medical struggle, like the several-week hospital stay in Birmingham after being airlifted there from Tuscaloosa.

Once in Birmingham, Angela Howell underwent the Merci Retrieval Procedure to remove the clot, a procedure that doctors explained to the family was not without risks.

Another scare for Angela Howell occurred when, a day and a half later while in a neurological intensive care room, she experienced a severe brain bleed that caused her brain to swell. Doctors again worked to preserve her life by performing additional surgery, and prayers ensued from people across the state who had been alerted to her situation.

Cecelia Sanford, Angela Howell's mother, said, "The hospital waiting room ... was just full of people hand in hand praying and asking God to let us keep her, because she's such a sweet, loving personality — always had been."

Angela Howell remained in surgical intensive care for about two weeks and was then moved to another recovery area for several additional weeks.

Her father, retired Alabama Baptist pastor Roy Sanford, said that according to one of the family's radiologist friends, she should not have lived through her ordeal. And another doctor friend told Roy Sanford that out of all his years in the medical field, he had only seen two times where one could absolutely say it was nothing but a miracle, and Angela Howell's case was one of those times. "It was God working all the way through it," Roy Sanford acknowledged.

After a six-week stint of rehabilitation where Angela Howell spent about eight hours a day in various therapies, she finally returned home. Paralyzed on her left side from the stroke, she began in-home therapy. "The doctor said it would be a miracle for me to walk again," she recalled.

Billy Howell remembers the day his wife returned home in a wheelchair. "We sat on the couch and just talked, and I found out how much determination she had,"

he said. And as a result of that determination, he added, 25 days later she was making tremendous improvements by taking small steps.

And there would be yet another miraculous element to his wife's story — at the time of her stroke, she was 12 weeks pregnant with their third child.

Before her stint in rehabilitation, doctors presented Angela Howell with the option to terminate the pregnancy based on potential issues both she and the baby could face, she said. The prognosis was that the baby would be born with multiple handicaps and a pregnancy would make recovery difficult on her own body, she said.

But she knew that God had a plan for her baby, she said. Without the ability to speak due to her paralysis when the option to abort was presented, Angela Howell instead gave her answer to the doctor in sign language, a method of communication she was knowledgeable of prior to her stroke. "I [answered], 'No way. The Lord gives me this baby. He has a plan for her. He will take care of her,'" she said. "[And] He did take care of her.

She was born just perfect and she is such a blessing to us."

Laci Belle Howell was born April 8, 2008. About 30 people — friends, family and church members — were at the hospital with the family on the day of her birth.

Now almost 5 years old, sweet and playful Laci Howell is lovingly known as a "miracle baby" to her family.

When Angela Howell reflects on these past few years, she is quick to acknowledge the countless people who prayed tirelessly for her recovery. "I think that on behalf of their prayers, God listened and heard the prayers of His children and He decided to do a miracle," she said.

At the time of her stroke, the Howells attended Lord of the Harvest Baptist Church, Northport (now Harvest Church). "They were prayer warriors," Angela Howell noted. Now members of Lakewood Baptist Church, Northport, the support from the Howells' current church family has only continued.

Dan Williams, pastor of Harvest Church, recalled the faith the Howells demonstrated during the time of Angela Howell's pregnancy with Laci despite the many unknowns and potential complications of the pregnancy. "They were committed to life with all the risks ... that [decision] potentially brought with it," Williams said, adding it was one of the greatest acts of faith he has seen in his 25 years of ministry.

Williams said, adding it was one of the greatest acts of faith he has seen in his 25 years of ministry.

Overcoming obstacles

He also personally observed Angela Howell's outlook that God be glorified through her journey despite the obstacles she faced. One example of this, Williams said, was how she openly shared her faith with others shortly after her stroke.

Billy Howell was equally inspired by his wife's heart to witness to others. "(Before she could begin to speak again) she was using sign language to ... witness to nurses" in the hospital, he said. "She would witness to any hospital employee who would come in [to her room] — that's just mind-blowing to me."

In the years following her stroke and the birth of daughter Laci, Angela Howell has boldly shared her story at churches including First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, where her parents attend and her father is a deacon.

"Of course I don't like all the disabilities that I have," she said softly as she reflected on her journey. "But the thing that I do like is that I have learned 100 percent how to truly rely on God's strength to make it through each day." ❧



LACI HOWELL

Photo courtesy of Roy Sanford



ANGELA HOWELL

Photo by Julie Payne

Technology brings new 'temptations'

The seven deadly sins have new partners in crime.

Lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride still attract a lot of attention. But as the Internet and other media invade American life, our vices have also gone virtual, according to a new study.

Nearly half of Americans say they are tempted to idle the hours away on the Internet, video games and television, according to Barna Group, a California-based Christian research organization.

The technological temptations reflect a shift in American morality, said David Kinnaman, Barna's president.

Contemporary life

Vice now "shadows many of the digital domains of contemporary life," he said. "For faith leaders, this shift underscores the importance of including technology and media as part of a broader discussion of spirituality and stewardship."

Young Americans are more likely to admit to being tempted

by transgressions, according to Barna's study. That may mean they are more willing to open up about their private lives, Kinnaman said. But it also suggests that young Americans see nothing wrong with breaking a commandment now and then.

"Millions of Millennials do not see temptation as something to be avoided, but rather a relatively benign feature of modern life," Kinnaman said.

Work-related vices top the list of temptations, according to Barna. The most commonly admitted temptation is worrying or anxiety, which 66 percent admit to. That's followed by procrastination (60 percent), eating too much (55 percent) spending too much time on media (44 percent) and being lazy (41 percent).

The Barna survey included 1,021 online interviews conducted among a sample of adults in all 50 states. The sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points, at the 95 percent confidence level. (RNS)

Biblical sermon on homosexuality derails Giglio inaugural prayer

The biblical standard that homosexuality is sinful has once again placed a Christian leader under public scrutiny, this time leading to the cancellation of Atlanta pastor Louie Giglio's benediction at President Obama's 2013 inauguration.

President Obama had selected Giglio to pray at the inaugural, which falls on the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, because of Giglio's campaign to end slavery worldwide.

Giglio had accepted President Obama's invitation to deliver the benediction at the Jan. 21 inaugural but withdrew from the program Jan. 10 after members of the pro-gay community complained about a biblically based sermon Giglio delivered in the 1990s and labeled him anti-gay.

In the sermon, "In Search of a Standard — Christian Response to Homosexuality," Giglio details Scripture that identifies homosexuality as sinful, and he offers the hope of transformation the apostle

Paul offered in 1 Corinthians 6:11. Uproar over Giglio's comments is the latest in a string of attacks against Christians supporting a biblical view of sexuality.

"We were not aware of Pastor Giglio's past comments at the time of his selection and they don't reflect our desire to celebrate the strength and diversity of our country at this inaugural," inaugural committee spokeswoman Addie Whisenant said in a statement Jan. 10.

"As we now work to select someone to deliver the benediction, we will ensure their beliefs reflect this administration's vision of inclusion and acceptance for all Americans," Whisenant said.

LifeWay Research indicates 44 percent of Americans believe homosexuality is a sin, said Ed Stetzer, LifeWay's vice president of research.

"This Louie Giglio moment, and the Chick-fil-A moment that preceded it, and the Rick Warren moment which preceded that raise the question: Where do we go from here?" Stetzer blogged.

"Furthermore what does this mean for Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Jews and so many more who believe that their authoritative religious texts teach something the prevailing culture finds so unacceptable that, even if they are working to eradicate slavery, they are no longer welcome in mainstream context?"

In announcing his withdrawal on the website of Passion City Church, which he leads, Giglio said his inclusion in the inaugural would place him in the middle of a fight not of his choosing.

"Due to a message of mine that has surfaced from 15-20 years ago, it is likely that my participation, and the prayer I would offer, will be dwarfed by those seeking to make their agenda the focal point of the inauguration," Giglio said.

"Neither I, nor our team, feel it best serves the core message and goals we are seeking to accomplish to be in a fight on an issue not of our choosing, thus I respectfully withdraw my acceptance of the president's invitation," Giglio said.

Preserving personal freedoms are critical, he said, even as salvation is offered to unbelievers.

Myrlie Evers-Williams, the widow of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, also is on the inaugural program.

(BP)



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— Bro. Justin Salter
Smithville Baptist Church

Lighted sign with electronic message board

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State Evangelism Conference

FBC Trussville to host 'packed, exciting, historic' event in February

Sammy Gilbreath said this year's State Evangelism Conference is packed. Exciting. Historic.

And pastors do not want to miss it, he said.

"The plate is fuller in this conference than it has ever been," said Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, of the event set for Feb. 25-26 at First Baptist Church, Trussville. "It's packed with a variety of speakers, and there are great musicians all day long."

Speakers for Monday night and Tuesday include:

► Herb Reavis, pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.,

► Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary,

► Ronnie Floyd, general editor of LifeWay Christian Resources' Bible Studies for Life curriculum series and lead pastor and strate-



FALWELL



FLOYD



KELLEY



LANIER



LUTER



REAVIS



RICE



SMITH

gist of SEND North America, a major church planting strategy,

► Jonathan Falwell, son of Jerry Falwell and senior pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va.,

► Dan Lanier, senior pastor of Northcrest Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss.,

► Robert Smith Jr., professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School of Samford Uni-

versity in Birmingham, and
► William Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Fla.

But "Tuesday night is where we are pointing all the arrows," Gilbreath said.

The Tuesday evening rally will feature Fred Luter, the first African-American president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and gospel singer Larnelle Harris.

"I think it's going to be a historic event and an exciting time," Gilbreath said.

During the conference, Alabama Baptists also will kick off Praying Across Alabama, an effort to hold prayer meetings on the steps of every courthouse in the state.

Praying Across Alabama culminates in the National Day of Prayer on May 2.

For more information call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 258, or email at anelson@alsbom.org. (TAB)

Want to know God?

By Pastor Ron Ethridge

What must a person do to be saved? Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." But what does that mean? Is it agreeing with facts, or something more?

For me to describe how to be saved, consider this account of how God saved me.

When I was 10 years old a friend asked, "If you died would you go to heaven or hell?" I didn't know, but I went home crying and told my mom I was afraid to die.

She told me how Jesus was crucified and punished for my sin, read John 3:16 and said if I asked God to forgive me, He would.

We knelt beside my bed and she asked God to save me. I didn't pray. But I remember love and peace flooding my soul. My fear was replaced with great joy. I was changed forever.

That night I began reading Scripture. I loved God and prayed constantly. I cherished going to church. My thoughts centered on God, Jesus, the Spirit and Scripture. I knew God saved me.

Forty-two years later my experience is just as real. At age 10, God convicted me of sin, revealed Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and as a result, I believed (Rom. 10:9-10).

Prayer didn't save me, God did. Walking an aisle in church didn't save me, faith in Christ did. Being baptized didn't save me either. But I was passionate about being baptized like Jesus.

The circumstances surrounding salvation may differ, but how God saves is always the same — "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Salvation is the result of God's call (John 6:40). Salvation always involves God's call and our response. God always saves those who desire to be saved.

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Slow-Growing State in Fast-Growing Part of Country

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The Census Bureau released its annual estimates of the populations of the 50 states in December. The numbers show that Alabama continues to be a slow-growing state in the fast-growing part of the country.

According to the Census estimates, 190 million people reside in the 30 states located in the southern and western U.S. These states are often called the "Sun Belt" region, and they contain 60 percent of the nation's population. In the past year the Sun Belt region accounted for an amazing 86 percent of the nation's population growth.

Growth leaders

Four southeastern states were among the growth leaders of the Sun Belt — Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. The other fast-growing Sun Belt states were farther west.

The remaining 123 million Americans live in 20 Northeastern and Midwestern states. This broad region grew at only one-fourth the rate of the Sun Belt and accounted for only 14 percent of the national population increase. Most states in the Northeast and Midwest grew at less than half the national rate.

Alabama ranks 23rd in size among the 50 states, with 4.8 million residents. The rate of population increase over the

past year was about half the national average and below all but five of the Sun Belt states. This is not unusual: Alabama grew at a below-average rate over the last decade, for example.

The Census Bureau also published information on the components of population growth during the past year. Some states increased due to net immigration, either from within the U.S. or from foreign countries; other states saw "natural" increases from the surplus of births over deaths.

These patterns of growth are generally stable over time. Florida's growth is primarily caused by the movement of people into the state. Utah has the highest rate of natural population increase. Texas benefits from both types of growth.

Alabama is not high in either growth category. Our median age is above average, which holds down the natural growth rate, and the numbers of people who move into and out of the state are relatively balanced.

The Sun Belt states with population growth rates below Alabama's in the past year were Arkansas, New Mexico, Kentucky, Mississippi and West Virginia.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

Board of Aid desires to 'get the word out' to students about scholarships

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Bill Goodwin, pastor of Lincoln Baptist Church in Coosa River Baptist Association, is a former recipient of a scholarship awarded by the Board of Aid for Students in Church-Related Vocations, and he remembers well receiving that scholarship.

In fact, the potential benefits of this scholarship are a reality Goodwin remains quite familiar with.

He serves as the Board of Aid's current chairman, and he desires to get further word out about the program, believing that students who qualify but don't apply are robbing themselves of funds that could be helping their education along.

Goodwin recalled interviewing an upperclassman for a scholarship who had only shortly beforehand discovered the Board of Aid — and just by not being aware of it,



GOODWIN

Goodwin said, that student had lost out on several semesters' worth of financial assistance.

As one of its primary functions, the Board of Aid financially assists undergraduate students who are entering vocational ministry and who

attend one of the three Alabama Baptist schools — Samford University in Birmingham, the University of Mobile and Judson College in Marion. "We are helping them (the students) achieve their educational goals in preparation for ministry," Goodwin explained.

Scholarships through the Board of Aid are awarded in the fall and spring. Students apply to the scholarship program, typically by going through their school's religion department to obtain an application and guidelines, Goodwin said.

The Board of Aid then arranges times with the schools to conduct on-campus interviews with the applicants. Students are interviewed by one of the board's committee members, and Goodwin said he is aware of several committee members who write down the names of the students they interview and personally pray for them.

Students must re-interview each semester as the scholarship is awarded by semester. Goodwin explained that students must meet several qualifications, including maintaining a 2.0 GPA and remaining involved in some type of local church ministry. He noted there are some exceptions to these qualifications; for example, ministries through the schools also qualify.

Review applications

The Board of Aid members then meet and review applications, and scholarship disbursements for the students who qualify conclude the process.

The Board of Aid receives funds from the Cooperative Program (CP) to fund its scholarships, Goodwin explained. He added that the scholarship amount is based on how much money the Board of Aid receives in CP dollars and is based on percent of tuition.

"Ideally, we would rather have more students [apply] and be able to help everybody a little bit," he noted. "We'd like to help more students ... and get the word out."

For the spring semester, the Board of Aid scholarship interviews will soon begin at the three respective schools. Goodwin encourages qualifying students who are interested in applying to contact their school's religion department.

The Board of Aid also awards scholarships to students of the Samford University Extension Division, he added, noting there is no age limitation for this particular scholarship nor does the Board conduct interviews for it.

The Board of Aid awarded 204 student scholarships in the amount of \$259,552 for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to the 2012 Book of Reports. "This is a great scholarship program," Goodwin concluded. "We want to get more students who ... qualify. [And for] those who do, we want to give them help if we can."

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



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Africa rises, China falls on persecution list

The persecution of Christians “vastly rose” in 2012 as radical Islamists consolidated power in Africa, according to Open Doors, a Christian missionary organization that publishes an annual list of offending nations.

Increasing threats to African Christians can be seen in focused attacks, such as the killings of Christians in Nigerian churches by the radical Muslim group Boko Haram, but also in the greater prevalence of radical Muslims in government, according to the California-based Open Doors.

In Mali, for example, which made the biggest leap on the “World Watch List,” from unranked in 2011 to No. 7 in 2012, a coup in the north brought fundamentalist Muslims to power.

“The situation in the north used to be a bit tense, but Christians and even missionaries could be active,” said Open Doors spokesman Jerry Dykstra. Now, he said, Christians there are in grave danger.

North Korea topped Open Doors’ list for the 11th year in a row and was followed by Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. Open Doors estimates that as many as 70,000 Christians are currently imprisoned in North Korea for being Christian, and the act of carrying a Bible can result in execution.

In neighboring China, the picture for Christians continues to improve, as that country slid from No. 21 in 2011 to No. 37 in 2012 — a stark difference from its Top 10 ranking five years ago.

More than 100 Chinese Chris-

tians still languish in prison, and the government still keeps close tabs on church officials. But “house searches, and the confiscation of Bibles and Christian books no longer occur on a large scale,” according to Open Doors.

Syria, now in the throes of a bloody revolution, became a country of particular concern. At No. 11 in 2012 and No. 36 the previous year, it was the report’s second-biggest jump. Under President Bashar al-Assad, who is now waging a ruthless campaign against Syrian rebels, “Christians were allowed the freedom to worship but

not evangelize,” according to Open Doors.

Ron Boyd-McMillan, chief strategy officer for Open Doors, said Syrian Christians have been hit with a “double whammy,” in that they are under pressure from rebels fighting against the regime and from radical jihadists who have entered Syria with an anti-Christian agenda.

“The good news in Syria is those Christians who are left behind are showing a great unity among different denominations,” Boyd-McMillan said. “The suffering has drawn them together.” (RNS)

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January Bible study



An in-depth look at Holy Week • 3 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

Lord's Supper unites believers in following after Christ

On Palm Sunday, Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as the Messianic King, and on the following day He drove merchants out of the temple. Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week were probably the busiest days of His entire teaching ministry.

Now we come to the day that in many churches is known as "Maundy Thursday." The word "maundy" is from a Latin word, *mandatum*, which means "washing," and it is used because on this day Jesus washed His disciples' feet. The story of that event appears only in the fourth Gospel (John 13:1ff). The other Gospels tell another story — the story of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper.

Thursday

Luke identifies Thursday as "the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed" (Luke 22:7). Jesus "eagerly desired to eat this Passover" with His disciples (Luke 22:15).

Just as He had exercised a king's prerogative and requisitioned a donkey for His ride into Jerusalem, so now He requisitioned an upstairs room in which He could eat the Passover meal. He sent Peter and John ahead to prepare the meal, which would include roasting the Passover lamb.

During the meal Jesus told His disciples (Luke calls them apostles, 22:14) that this would be His last meal until the Messianic banquet of the kingdom of God (22:16).

He then instituted the meal that Paul called "the Lord's Supper" (see 1 Cor. 11:20). Luke wrote that following Pentecost the church was "devoted ... to the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42), which probably is a reference to the Lord's Supper, and Christians have been sharing this meal ever since. Some years ago, New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd wrote that "for nineteen centuries there has not been one single week in which this act of remembrance was not made." Almost all churches — the Quakers and the Salvation Army are exceptions — celebrate the Lord's Supper. They also agree that the Lord's Supper is a matter of obedience, remembrance, thanksgiving and communion.

Most of Jesus' commands were about moral rather than ritual matters, but He did command that this meal be observed. Therefore observing it is an act of obedience to Jesus.

The churches also agree that the Lord's Supper is, like the Passover meal, a memorial meal. Jesus said it was to be eaten "in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19; see also 1 Cor. 11:24). Just as the Passover lamb reminds Jews of their deliverance from captivity in Egypt, so unleavened bread and wine remind Christians of their Passover lamb (see 1 Cor. 5:7) and His role in their deliverance from captivity in sin.

The churches also agree that the meal is a meal of thanksgiving. As the Jews were thankful for their deliverance at the Passover, and as Jesus was thankful for the bread and

By Fisher Humphreys

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



wine at His Last Supper (see Luke 22:17, 19), so Christians are thankful for Jesus and His self-sacrifice. Some churches call this meal the Eucharist because the Greek word for "thanksgiving" is *eucharistia*, and in 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul may have used the word *eucharistia* for the Lord's Supper.

The churches also agree that the Lord's Supper is a *koinonia* (1 Cor. 10:16), that is, a communion, sharing or shared life. In addition to sharing the meal with His disciples, Jesus provided a dramatic symbol of their sharing. It was customary at Passover for each participant to have an individual cup, but Jesus told His disciples to drink from a single cup (see Luke 22:17).

Most Christians probably have felt an awareness of their communion with one another while observing the Lord's Supper. Just as our biological life is sustained by the food we eat, so our common life in Christ is sustained by the Supper we eat together.

In the Lord's Supper we are sharing not only with each other but also with the Lord. This is His meal, and He is always present for it. Of course, Jesus is always with Christians, but He is with them in a special way when they gather in His name. Likewise He is with Christians in all their meals, but He is with them in a special way

And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

Luke 22:19

when they gather to observe His meal.

Here a fateful disagreement exists among the churches. We all agree that the Lord is present, but we disagree about how to express His presence.

Jesus' own way of expressing His presence was to speak of the bread and wine as His body and blood (see 1 Cor. 11:24–25). Whatever else that meant, it must have meant He would be present when the Lord's Supper is observed.

Many Baptist churches express Jesus' presence in a charming way. As a rule Baptist churches do not have an altar in their buildings; Baptists do not think of the Lord's Supper as offering a sacrifice to God. Instead each Baptist church has a "table of the Lord" (the phrase is Paul's; see 1 Cor. 10:21) and invites Christians to come to the table of the Lord to share the Supper of the Lord. This is a lovely way of saying that our communion is with the Lord as well as with each other.

However we may express the manner of Jesus' presence at the Lord's Supper, it is real, it is spiritual and it is a mystery.

The Lord's Supper is important to the life of the church and should be observed in a worthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27). The Swiss theologian Emil Brunner said he thought Jesus had given the ordinances to the church (he called them "sacraments") so that, even when preachers fail to preach the gospel, the church would have reminders of the gospel events of Jesus' death and resurrection. He wrote: "The Lord surely knew what He was doing when, on that last night, He said to His Disciples, 'This do in remembrance of Me.' Without the Sacraments the Church would long ago have disappeared. ... The Sacraments are the divinely given flying buttresses which save the Church from collapse."

Before the Passover meal ended, Jesus pronounced a woe on Judas. Even though Jesus' approaching death was part of God's plan and foreknowledge (see Luke 22:22 and also Acts 2:23), Judas was still responsible for his betrayal of Jesus.

After the Passover meal ended, Jesus went across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives a short distance east of Jerusalem. He remained in a garden there (see John 18:1) until He was arrested. He prayed about what was going to happen to Him, and His prayer was intense. Naturally He did not want to experience the torture and crucifixion that He saw coming, so He understandably prayed, "Remove this cup from me" (Luke 22:42; see also Heb. 5:7–10). Nevertheless He was perfectly willing to drink the cup if that was the Father's will. It was, and He did.

It is important for us to believe as Jesus did that what He was doing was God's will and that He was dying for the sins of the world. But believing is not enough. We who believe must also deny ourselves and take up the cross daily and follow Jesus (see Luke 9:23). ☞

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 20

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen

Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

VALUE ALL HUMAN LIFE
Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 1:15-17;
Psalm 139:13-16; Mark 10:13-16

Many churches set aside this day in a special effort to be advocates for the unborn and to permeate our culture with the biblical teachings regarding the sanctity of human life. The Bible passages selected for this lesson focus on reasons we are to value human life as God's gift.

Affirm Life's Value (Gen. 1:26-27)
The main reason that human life is valued is because we are the only creation created in the image of God. This gives human life a higher value than all other life. This can be seen from Genesis 9:6 when God tells Noah, "Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood will be shed by man, for God made man in His image."

This is not said of any other creature. Strangely, we live in a culture where this is often reversed. One can receive hefty fines and time in prison for killing certain creatures like whales, dolphins or eagles, but one can kill an unborn child legally. This is not to say that Christians should promote killing these other animals, but it shows how our culture's priorities are wrong. The idea that man is made in God's image gives Christians a definitive reason why they can stand up for all human beings — the infirm, the mentally handicapped and the unborn. This sets Christianity apart from many other worldviews and religions because we have a clear command from God. Other worldviews are based on opinion and changing social mores, which means that there is no reason why they should or should not value human life.

Respect and Protect Life (Ex. 1:15-17)
One of the main reasons that the Egyptians began persecuting the Israelites was because they were becoming too plentiful and Pharaoh feared they would become more numerous and powerful than the Egyptians. He sought to remedy the situation by having the Hebrew boys killed at birth. The Hebrew midwives recognized the wickedness of this

command and disobeyed the order. Although Christians are to be obedient to their governing authorities, we are supposed to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). If our society or government try to force us to do something that God clearly says is wrong, our priority is with God. Even though abortion is legal in the United States, this does not make it right and Christians should try to change the minds of those who are pro-abortion. In addition, we need to speak out on behalf of the unborn since they cannot speak for themselves. We need to care for the least of these, just as Jesus commanded us to.

Celebrate Life's Purpose (Ps. 139:13-16)
This Psalm is one of the strongest passages used to support the idea of personhood for the child in the womb. Many pro-abortion advocates assert that a fetus is not a person, and if it is not a person, it does not have the same rights as human beings. However, this Psalm affirms that God is at work in the womb of the mother, showing that God had a plan for David while he was in his mother's womb. Surely if God had a plan for him while in the womb, this affirms the value of the unborn child and shows that God also has a plan for us.

Follow Jesus' Example (Mark 10:13-16)
When the children were brought to Jesus, the disciples tried to get rid of them because they felt that Jesus was too important for little children. However, Jesus wanted to be with the children because He valued them and knew their faith was an example to the adults. In our society children are often pushed into the background, seen as nuisances and irritants because they get in our way. Many people emphasize their jobs over their children or place their own selfishness over the benefit of their children. Divorces happen even though the children will be negatively affected because the adults put their own desires over that of their children. As Christians we should follow Christ's example of valuing children.

Bible Studies for Life

By Michael Wilson

Director, Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence, Samford University

OBADIAH: A MESSAGE OF GOD'S JUSTICE
Obadiah 1-4, 10-15, 17-18, 21

How should we respond to tragic and unjust events happening in the lives of others? Does it seem we are powerless to make a difference for good in the presence of pervasive injustice? Is this why we choose indifference over action? What if we are the victims of injustice?

The brief prophecy of Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, presents a message of God's activity in the presence of indifference and unrighteousness. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. We know these brothers had a tumultuous relationship characterized by deceit and even hatred. Yet the Edomites were blood kin to the Israelites and both were bound by Deuteronomic law to honor each other (Deut. 23:7). Obadiah tells the story of the Edomites' failure to honor the relationship. Not only did they turn against Judah during the time of the Babylonian conquest, the haughty Edomites delighted in the catastrophe their brothers and sisters in Judah experienced at the hands of foreign invaders.

God acts in decisive and deliberate ways when dealing with arrogance and prideful behaviors, especially when these behaviors harm innocent persons.

This lesson calls us to move from an attitude of apathy to one of engagement and action. What might we do to change injustice into justice, to aid the victimized, to turn wrong into right?

God's Action Is Certain (1-4)
"I will bring you down, says the Lord" (v. 4). The nation of Edom was situated in a region that was easily defended. Mountains and steep cliffs offered natural barriers for protection. Water was abundant and the land was well suited for farming. There was plenty of food for the large population. The Edomites thought they were secure and beyond needing help from others. It is not difficult for us to understand how

they might regard themselves superior to their conquered kin in the nation of Judah. Obadiah's prophecy is clear: they would be brought down. The Lord God would act on behalf of the victimized Israelites. Big Edom would be made small among the nations. Rather than be looked up to, they would be despised. Arrogance, pride, over-confidence and a self-assured attitude — whether among nations or individuals — are contrary to the way of God.

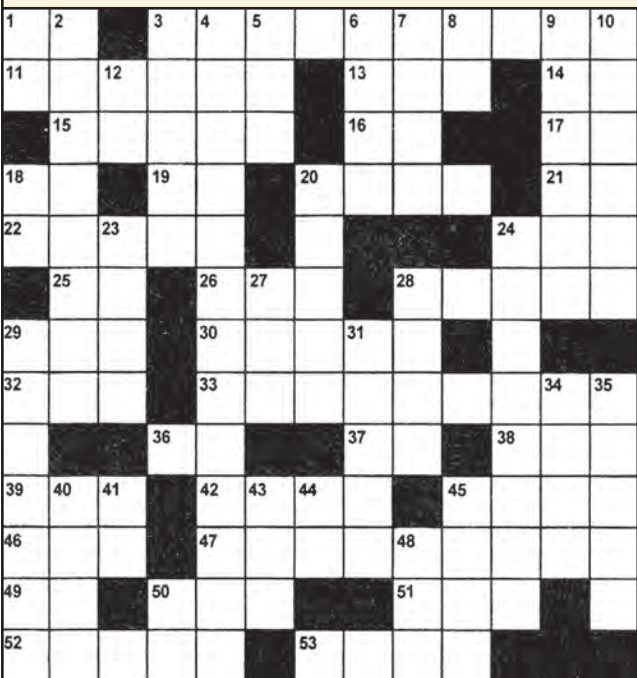
God's Action Is Near (10-15)
The German pastor Martin Niemöller was a courageous voice against Nazi evils during World War II. A saying of his is on display near the exit in the winding exhibit of the Holocaust Museum in Washington: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me."

It was bad enough that the Edomites did not come to the aid of their brother nation. Even worse, they gloated over the calamity Judah experienced. God takes human relationships seriously. The responsibilities of neighbor for neighbor, promises between husbands and wives, obligations of siblings to each other — all are important to God. Edom ignored such relational covenants. As a result, God's justice led to its destruction.

God's Action Brings Deliverance (17-18, 21)
In contrast to the "day of Edom" (11-14), Obadiah declared a coming "day of the Lord" (15). Things would not go well for Edom on that day, or for other nations that fail to honor the way of righteousness. The Israelites, once victims of abuse, would know restoration and redemption. What might we do to bring restoration and redemption to the abused and despised we see around us?

Christian Crossword

By Rebecca Souder Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- 1. Greek letter.
- 3. Being the ____ of his glory. (Heb. 1:3)
- 11. One who inherits. (2 words)
- 13. Greek monogram for Jesus.
- 14. Pint. (abbr.)
- 15. And the ____ of his person. (Heb. 1:3)
- 16. To whom shall we ____? (John 6:68)
- 17. Either/____.
- 18. Headquarters. (abbr.)
- 19. New Hampshire.
- 20. ____ saith the Lord.
- 21. Kansas University.
- 22. New wine will ____ the bottles. (Luke 5:37)
- 24. His servants ____ him. (John 4:51)
- 25. That is. (Latin abbr.)
- 26. French coin.
- 28. Thirty silver _____. (Matt. 26:15)
- 29. Greek vowel.
- 30. Better.
- 32. Prefix meaning

- "wood."
 - 33. ____ all things by the word of His power. (Heb. 1:3)
 - 36. Thy throne, O God, ____ for ever. (Heb. 1:8)
 - 37. A division of Scripture.
 - 38. ... art my _____. (Heb. 1:5)
 - 39. Grain of bread.
 - 42. A more excellent ____ than they. (Heb. 1:4)
 - 45. Greek porch.
 - 46. Greek goddess.
 - 47. Show you a more ____ way. (1 Cor. 12:31)
 - 49. Storekeeper. (abbr.)
 - 50. ____ hospitality one to another. (1 Pet. 4:9)
 - 51. He that hath an ____ let him hear. (Rev. 2:7)
 - 52. Kind of worshipers the Father _____. (John 4:23)
 - 53. He looked for a _____. (Heb. 11:10)
- Down
- 1. Ma's mate.
 - 2. Hated _____. (Heb. 1:9)
 - 3. Vegetables.
 - 4. Loved _____. (Heb. 1:9)
 - 5. Anger.
 - 6. Right hand of the Majesty on _____. (Heb. 1:3)
 - 7. ____ art my Son. (Heb. 1:5)
 - 8. Nova Scotia. (abbr.)
 - 9. Hath in these last days ____ unto us. (Heb. 1:2)
 - 10. Walks proudly.
 - 12. His Majesty. (abbr.)
 - 18. Hemoglobin. (abbr.)
 - 20. The word of _____. (James 1:18)
 - 23. True.
 - 24. Sent forth to ____ for them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. 1:14)
 - 27. Drink this _____. (1 Cor. 11:26)
 - 28. Sitting upon ... a _____. (Matt. 21:5)
 - 29. And the ____ of his person. (Heb. 1:3)
 - 31. Recipient.
 - 34. Come nigh unto Damascus about ____.

- (Acts 22:6)
- 35. Dust ... became _____. (Ex. 8:17)
- 40. My ____ is easy. (Matt. 11:30)
- 41. Emergency service. (abbr.)
- 43. The ____ is laid the root. (Matt. 3:10)
- 44. Master of Ceremonies. (abbr.)
- 45. I will ____ thy son. (Ex. 4:23)
- 48. ____ there be light. (Gen. 1:3)
- 50. United Kingdom. (abbr.)



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature

Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp and Adam Borden

ANDREW ALFORD

My Resolution

Andrew Alford Music

It's great to find good music where you're not expecting it.

A few weeks ago our editorial assistant for online communications at *The Alabama Baptist* sent a new CD, Andrew Alford's "My Resolution," and forwarded an email from his manager. The unexpected part is that Alford and his family attend my home church, Central Baptist Church, Decatur, where I am a member of the praise band.

The fact that I didn't know him or his music should probably begat another post, but let's do one thing at a time.

Alford wrote all the lyrics and music for "My Resolution." For a first effort, the lyrics show a lot of maturity, and Alford's vocals are clear and emotive. Producer David Vest assembled a fine cast of musicians and recorded everything at his studio E320 Productions in Decatur. Those who know Vest know that the production and musicianship, as always, is top-notch.

Alford says the title cut and the theme for the album is "my resolution to live a life that is

pleasing to God and to bring the message of Jesus to a world that is searching for something to believe in." I'd say he hit his mark. I'm looking forward to the next CD. (Sharp)

EDDIE KIRKLAND

Kings & Queens

North Point Music, Inc.

Eddie Kirkland, accomplished worship leader and music director at North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Ga., has released his first album on the North Point Music label titled "Kings & Queens." The title is a reference to Kirkland's musings regarding God's purpose for us here and now, that we are kings and queens in God's kingdom and that heaven isn't "just a lifeboat, a way off this sinking ship we call Earth."

Those familiar with North Point Music will rightly guess that this record is expertly recorded and produced, full of great, hooky melodies, explosive dynamics and excellent musicianship.

Kirkland's lyrics, with occasional help from Steve Fee, Don Chaffer, Keith Balltzglier and Todd Fields are spot on for this kind of worship music, and Kirk-

land's clear, expressive vocals absolutely kill.

Worship leaders, you may have found your inspiration here. (Sharp)

THE GAITHER VOCAL BAND

Pure and Simple

Gaither Music

Is it just me or is it that the older we get we tend to gravitate toward the pure and simple things of life? How many midlife rat racers have dreamed of retiring to a quiet town or a small farm like the one they grew up on to live the simple life once again? I have a friend who grew up a punk rocker with spiky green hair and tattoos. A funny thing happened the first time he heard acoustic bluegrass music: He put away his punk ways and plugged into the purity of acoustic instruments being played skillfully.

Anyway, the simple life and pure music have converged on a new record from The Gaither Vocal Band. Under the guidance of a born-and-bred bluegrass/acoustic music master, Bill Gaither and the boys have presented us something that is "Pure and Simple."

Gaither allowed Ben Isaacs to stretch his producing wings further than ever before on "Pure and Simple." My bass-playing buddy's job was strengthened slightly with a crew of pro play-

ers and this quintet of singers. Bill, Mark, Michael, Wes and David jumped on the acoustic truck and built signature Vocal Band harmony that simply amazes the listener. The namesake of this Vocal Band left a vacancy when it came to solos, but Bill Gaither fills out the lower end of the harmony like no other. At the top of the harmony is one of the most dynamic singers of all time in any genre. David

Phelps displays his stellar chops throughout the record on cuts like "Come to Jesus," "Glorious Freedom" and "I'm Rich."

Do yourself a favor and listen to this recording at least once while using really good headphones. If you want a double-shot espresso of wake-up music, turn up "Winds of This World" or "I'm Rich." For a "do-what?" double-take, turn up the acoustic versions of "The Old Rugged Cross Made the Difference" and "I Don't Want to Get Adjusted." When you think it is just about over for you, turn up "Come to Jesus" and "I'll Pray for You." (Borden)



Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Unconditional

Eva Marie Everson. Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Publishing Group, 2012. 228 pp. (Paperback).

While the tradition has been to base movies on books, this book turns the tables: it is a book based on a movie. "Unconditional" is the story of a young woman who is suddenly widowed and is unable to come to terms with her husband's death. Left severely depressed, she decides to go to the place where he was killed and take her own life; instead of dying, though, she is caught up in a drama that ultimately gives her a reason to live. Maybe a little trite, but there are enough surprises here to keep the reader engaged in the story.

The book and the movie are "inspired by true events." The LifeWay movie had a limited release in early fall of 2012 and a DVD release is in the works.

No date has been announced.

Readers of Christian fiction will probably recognize the name of the author. Eva Marie Everson has been writing Christian fiction for some time, with several well-written books to her credit. This one is no different — a good read with a solid message.

Confessions of a Prayer Slacker

Diane Moody. OBT Books, 2012. 184 pp. (Kindle Version).

How can you resist a book with a title like that? As soon as I read about it, I ordered it for my Kindle so I could read it immediately. I needed it that badly.

The book spoke to me immediately. Moody even tells my story in the introduction:

"I've got shelves lined with books about prayer. I've tried prayer formulas. I even tried 'praying the scriptures.' ... Some-

times I'd be inspired by a sermon on the subject and recommit myself to pray daily. I'd buy a new notebook to organize my praying. I'd pick a time of day that best suited my schedule. And off I'd go ... for a day or two. Time after time, I'd make the effort only to fail again and again. And with each failure, I'd hear that sarcastic and belittling voice in my head reminding me once again what a ... sorry excuse for a Christian I'd become."

In this small book, easily read in a day or so, Moody shares her struggles with becoming the woman of prayer she knows she should be.

The reader is encouraged right along with Moody to revolutionize her prayer life — to meet Jesus every day, building an intimate relationship with Him. By the end of the book, the title should be "Slackers No More!"

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Nonfiction

1. Jesus Calling, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. Nearing Home, Billy Graham (Thomas Nelson)
4. Jesus Today, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
5. I Declare, Joel Osteen (FaithWords)
6. The Purpose of Christmas, Rick Warren (Howard Books)
7. Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. Heaven Is for Real, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
9. Praying God's Word, Beth Moore (B&H)
10. Bonhoeffer, Eric Metaxas (Thomas Nelson)

Youth

1. The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zondervan)
2. The Action Bible New Testament, Sergio Cariello (David C Cook)
3. Jesus Calling, 365 Devotions for Kids, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. The Beginner's Bible, Kelly Pulley (Zondervan)
5. Jesus Calling — Teen Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. The Action Bible, Sergio Cariello (David C Cook)
7. Jesus Calling Bible Storybook, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. The Legend of the Candy Cane, Lori Walburg (Zondervan)
9. The Berenstain Bears Show God's Love, Jan Berenstain and Mike Berenstain (Zondervan)
10. Away in a Manger, Lisa Reed and Randle Paul Bennett (Guideposts)

JOY^{IN} CHRIST

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Mobile BayBears pitcher Anderson seeks to be God's instrument

The biggest hit in Chase Anderson's life wasn't from a batter he was opposing; it came from a life-changing phone call.

When Anderson was in spring training preparing for the 2012 season he was notified March 19 that his father, Robert Dale Anderson, had died of a massive heart attack. He was 58.

"It was another surreal feeling. It was like a dream," said Anderson, who boarded a flight in Arizona for Fort Smith, Ark., where his father had moved to take a new job.

"It was weird walking into the house with him not there. Going into the backyard, I shed some pretty big tears," said Chase Anderson, a pitcher for the Mobile BayBears.

His father and mother, Michelle Anderson Hyde, divorced when Chase Anderson was 12 and he chose to live with his father.

"The things we had in life were pretty surreal. It was me and him. We did everything together."

His father told him that hard work and perseverance would take him wherever he wanted to go.

"Each day there are good things and bad things. You've got to take the positive and understand that the Lord has a plan for you. Having a relationship with Christ will get you through anything," said Chase Anderson, 25.

It was the second time Chase Anderson had to go through the death of a family member. His grandmother, Annette Harris Anderson, died in August 2009. She fell off a step at her home in Wichita Falls, Texas, and died seven hours later from bleeding on the brain.

As well as role models, they are "both big-time icons," Chase Anderson said. "Both of them are very strong people. I guess you say that is the motivation every day now."

A right-hander, Chase Anderson finished the 2012 season with a 5-4 record and a 2.86 ERA. He struck out 97 batters. He helped lead Mobile to its second straight Southern League championship with a change-up pitch that has been rated the best in the Arizona Diamondbacks' organization.

Chase Anderson was drafted in the ninth round of the 2009 First-Year Player Draft out of the University of Oklahoma (OU) where he played three years. It was in 2009 that Annette Anderson led him to Christ.

Before he pitches he reads the Bible that belonged to her. "It's like gold to me. I keep it with me all the time. It's like having her with me," said Chase Anderson, who went to church with her at Floral Heights United Methodist Church, Floral Heights, Texas, and also attended Colonial Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas. He now attends the Village Church, Dallas, Texas.

"I would say I am more of a Baptist Christian. You

try to live for the Lord and give Him all the glory in everything you do, whether it's on the field or off the field."

The loss of his father and grandmother did not strike him out.

Turner Ward, who managed the BayBears last season, said, "You would have never known he has been through this type of a tragedy."

Chase Anderson said, "If I don't have a smile on my face, something is wrong. ... The Lord and the relationship you have with Him is just huge."

Chase Anderson, who attends Scottsdale Bible Church when he plays in Arizona, said his life has changed "day and night" since becoming a Christian.

Matt Davidson, a third baseman for Mobile, called Chase Anderson a "great guy" who "follows the Word. He is a positive guy all the time and he is a great pitcher. He is a great guy in the clubhouse with a great vibe."

Chase Anderson also prays during morning devotionals. "He is right there with me. You are never by yourself. I miss my dad. I miss my grandmother. That is kind of a selfish thing. I miss them but I know where they are. They are in heaven and enjoying the time up there."

Robert Anderson encouraged Chase Anderson to become a "man of God, do the right thing, treat people the right way and live the Christian life," Chase Anderson said.

While describing

himself as a laid-back, Southern, Texas boy who would love to be a country singer and has a tradition of washing his 2012 Ford truck once a week, Chase Anderson is a warrior on the mound, he said. He can throw his change-up on any count. At Rider High School in Wichita Falls, he was all-state as a senior and tossed three no-hitters, had a .50 ERA and a 12-1 record and was the district MVP. His 155 strikeouts were the most in Texas in Class 4-A in 2006. He led OU his junior season in appearances and went 2-1 in the Big 12.

Chase Anderson became engaged in December to Anna Cameron of Wichita Falls.

With a goal of being a "good person first and foremost," Chase Anderson said he wants "to give my all to the guys on this team each time I go out."

He represented Mobile in the Southern League All-Star game when he was named a mid-season all-star in 2012. He also was selected to play in the Arizona Fall League (AFL). He went 3-1 with the Salt River Rafters with a 3.47 ERA and was named AFL Rising Star.

"Hopefully I'll get to the big leagues and have a good career there," Chase Anderson said. "The Lord is in control. He is going to take me where I need to go."



Chase Anderson

Photo courtesy of Mobile BayBears

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Islamic extremists shoot, wound Catholic priest

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania — Suspected Islamic extremists on Christmas Day shot a Roman Catholic priest on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar, seriously wounding him, area church leaders said.

Two assailants on a motorcycle shot Ambrose Mkenda through his cheeks and in the shoulder before 8 p.m. as he arrived home in Tomondo, about four miles from Zanzibar City.

Christian leaders suspected members of the separatist group Uamsho or "Awakening," the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation.

Lucian Mgaywa, general secretary of the Church of God in Zanzibar, said, "Just as he was arriving at the gate, the suspected group shot him from his right through his cheeks, and he became unconscious."

Uamsho distributed leaflets threatening church leaders in Zanzibar in October, when authorities arrested group Commander Sheikh Farid Hadi Ahmed and six others following several attacks on church buildings on Zanzibar and the mainland.

"The threats issued by Uamsho read, 'We now want the heads of all the church pastors in Zanzibar,'" Mgaywa said. "Such utterances caused a lot of panic, and some of the pastors feared for their lives and fled out of Zanzibar to the mainland of Tanzania."

Police reportedly said the assailants did not take anything from the unconscious priest.

Obeid Fabian, head of the Zanzibar Pastors' Fellowship, said the suspects have not been arrested and that the Uamsho threats leave little doubt about who shot the priest.

Algerian Christian unknowingly convicted, sentenced

TIZI OUZOU, Algeria — Without any prior notice or summons from police, a Christian convert from Islam received word Dec. 11 that he had been convicted of pressuring a Muslim to leave his religion, he said.

Mohamed Ibaouene, 36, was convicted in absentia July 4 by a court in Tizirt and sentenced to one year in prison and a fine of \$635, according to a copy of the judgment prepared by a court in Tindouf, where he held a position with an international business. "I have never been summoned by the police or any other authority — I have never been investigated by the police," Ibaouene said.

Ibaouene said that earlier in the year a 27-year-old Islamic extremist from Algiers who worked as a machine operator at the company where he held a management post approached him at his office for the sole purpose of asking him, "Is it true that you are a Christian?"

When Ibaouene replied, "Yes, I am," the young worker — identified only as Abdelkrim M. — began to try to persuade him to return to Islam, which he called "the religion of all Algerians," Ibaouene said.

Ibaouene refused to renounce Christ.

Abdelkrim M. then filed a complaint with the police in Tindouf, accusing Ibaouene of pressuring him to renounce Islam.

Christians killed in Christmas bloodshed in Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria — Christmas Eve attacks by suspected Islamic extremists in northern Nigeria's Borno state took the lives of six people at a Baptist church, as gunmen killed six others in Yobe state the same night.

In Borno state, where Islamic extremist group Boko Haram is based, six Christians were slain at First Baptist Church in Maiduguri on Christmas Eve. In Yobe state, gunmen believed to be members of Boko Haram reportedly entered the Evangelical Church Winning All in Peri, near Potiskum. They killed six Christians including a pastor before setting the church building ablaze. Several others were reported seriously wounded.

No group has claimed responsibility for the Christmas Eve attacks, but Boko Haram mounted Christmas assaults on Christians last year and in 2010. Boko Haram, which reportedly has ties to Al Qaeda, has vowed to eradicate Christianity from Nigeria and seeks to impose a strict version of *sharia* (Islamic law) on the entire country. Boko Haram has targeted churches, state offices, law enforcement sites and some moderate mosques in its effort to destabilize the government.