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INSIDE



Midweek services still prove to be important for relationship building, missions education

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Faith in America could have bright future, says Gallup editor-in-chief Newport

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FBC Haleyville reaches community with food pantry ministry

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Sharing Jesus with Jews

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist



Jews gather to read and pray at the Western Wall, or 'Wailing Wall,' a permanent place of worship for the Jews in Jerusalem.

IMB photo

Fears, misunderstandings 'paralyze' Christians, keep them from sharing with Jews

There are a number of people who would tell you there's no point — don't bother sharing Jesus with the Jewish man next door. He's either too far gone, or he doesn't need you anyway.

Some people say when Jesus came and ushered in the gospel for the worldwide Church, God was finished with the Jews because they rejected the Messiah. Others say their purpose was so permanent that God never intended for them to need Jesus at all — they are saved through the covenant

God made with them at Mount Sinai. But Ben Martin, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among the Jews, said both of those thoughts are major enemies to the salvation of Jews.

"These two ideas paralyze people from sharing the gospel with Jews today," Martin said. And neither of them is right, he said.

"We know that dual covenant theology — the idea that Jews can be saved without Jesus — can't be right, because Paul says 'I wish myself to be accursed' so that his

Jewish brothers could be saved," Martin said, citing Romans 9:3. "He wouldn't make that statement if all Jews were automatically right with God even if they didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah."

It's also clear that God didn't end His purpose for the Jews when Jesus came, Martin said. Jesus was Jewish, Paul and the disciples were Jews and the gospel spread to the Jews first, he said.

"God Himself has promised that He would save the Jews, so we know there will be Jews who believe in

Jesus so He can fulfill His promise," he said.

And right now, more Jews than ever claim *Yeshua HaMasheach* — Jesus Christ — as Savior and Lord, Martin said.

"We have the most documented believers (among Jews) we have had since the first century, and it's a growing phenomenon," he said.

One catalyst for that has been the church's changing stand on Jewish identity, Martin said.

It used to be that if a Jew came to (See 'Withholding,' page 4)

"We know that dual covenant theology — the idea that Jews can be saved without Jesus — can't be right, because Paul says 'I wish myself to be accursed' so that his Jewish brothers could be saved."

Ben Martin, Christian worker

COMMENT

We Should Know Better

A survey released by LifeWay Christian Resources on Jan. 14 documented that what often falls under the category of general knowledge can be completely wrong.

In the survey, 52 percent of pastors agreed with the statement that if someone dies without a will, their family decides what is done with the assets of the deceased. Another 11 percent of pastors did not know what happens to the assets in such cases.

In fact, families have no input to what happens to assets of the deceased when that person dies without a will.

More disturbing was the finding that 58 percent of pastors with a child under age 18 did not have a will. Again, general knowledge may hold that the surviving spouse will take care of the children and inherit the assets but that is not the case. The surviving spouse would have custody of the children but assets would be divided between the surviving spouse and the children.

Alabama law specifies that the courts would then appoint a conservator to safeguard the inheritance of minor children. A conservator is required to post bond and to make periodic reports to the court about safeguarding efforts. This is true even if the court appoints the surviving spouse as conservator.

The whole process becomes unnecessarily complicated and expensive because what passes for general knowledge is wrong.

Still the survey found that pastors in the age group most likely to have minor children (ages 18–44) are the least likely to have made preparation for their families in case of an untimely death. Only 32 percent had a will; 13 percent had a living will; and 12 percent had a durable power of attorney with health care directives.

What is true for pastors is true for other Americans according to another survey, which found that 50 percent of all Americans with children did not have a written will.

The problem is not limited to those with minor children. A Harris survey found that 41 percent



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

of baby boomers (those now entering retirement) do not have a will and that 55 percent of adult Americans do not have a will.

We should know better.

Christians do not have to be convinced that God is the Creator and ultimate Owner of everything (Ps. 24:1–2). Believers understand that we are called to be stewards and managers of all that God entrusts to us in life (Matt. 25:21). That includes financial resources as well as time, talents and influence. Yet the majority of us fail to make decisions about how and by whom our stewardship will be continued when we are no longer able to carry on.

Life is always changing

Frequently people say they are waiting for the right time before making a will. Usually that means a time when all the pieces of life come together and all the circumstances are just like the individual wants them. But that time never comes. There is never a time when life stops, when situations remain the same, when no new circumstances develop. Life is always changing.

Truthfully there is no time to stop planning how Christian stewardship will be exercised over all God has entrusted to one's care. It is impossible to make a will today that will reflect all the circumstances and commitments existing 20 years from now. Wills and estate plans have to be revisited periodically and updated regularly.

But there has to be a beginning point. There has to be a first time when a will is written and one's desires are outlined.

Procrastination also results in people failing to make a will. They are just too busy to take the time. Unfortunately the results of putting off until tomorrow what can be done today can have devastating impact on a family and an estate. When the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "It is required of stewards that one be found faithful," writing a will may not have been foremost in his mind, but the principle certainly applies.

No one should be too busy to do what is right.

For some, cost is a barrier, according to several studies. Yet it is hard to put a price tag on peace of mind, on the knowledge that one has been obedient to God's Word and planned how one's stewardship will be continued when one is no longer able to carry on.

What is the price of properly preparing for the care of one's children and other family members, of discharging obligations, of keeping commitments, of helping accomplish dreams?

The old English adage about being "penny wise and pound foolish" comes to mind. One may be so concerned about saving pennies that it ends up costing much, much more.

In addition to a will, another necessary document is a living will. This document outlines one's desires about life-prolonging medical treatments if one suffers from a terminal illness or is in a permanent vegetative state.

A durable power of attorney document with health care directives is another part of preparing for the future. This designates someone to make health care decisions for you when you are unable to make them for yourself for some reason.

While no one likes to imagine such circumstances, they do happen. Sadly they happen unexpectedly and often.

It is kinder and wiser for the family to know one's wishes and to understand who you have chosen to make necessary decisions than to create confusion and anxiety for everyone by leaving those questions unanswered.

All of us know better than to ignore making a will, drafting a living will or working out a durable power of attorney. We know the perils. Most have seen sad situations when we shook our heads bewildered that one failed to properly prepare as a Christian steward and a loving family member.

We know better. Now we need to take action. There is no reason such a large percentage of adult Alabama Baptists should not have a will and some kind of estate plan.

To learn more about these topics, contact The Baptist Foundation of Alabama at www.tbfa.org or 334-394-2000.

Letters to the Editor

'WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS'

I have to say I was shocked when I read the editorial "All a Part of the Christmas Story" in the Dec. 20 issue. You not only reference "players" that are not mentioned in the Bible but also describe some of the players incorrectly. For instance, the Bible does not say that Mary rode a donkey. We are only told that she and Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem. While you refer to the stable several times, the Bible only tells us that Jesus was placed in a manger. There are no animals mentioned in the Bible account.

You overlook the angel that announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds but do make reference to the angels that sang. Actually the Bible states that angels began praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest."

Finally you say the magi's gifts "were laid before the baby" and later "left on the stable floor." The Bible says the magi came into the house and saw the Child. The magi did not visit Jesus at the manger.

Perhaps some of your comments are based on "tradition" or the opinions of biblical scholars. But when

information is given in the Bible we certainly need to be careful not to contradict what the Bible says.

Sheree Powell
Tallahassee, Ala.

MEDICAL MISSIONS

I am so grateful to you and your staff for the series of articles featured in the Jan. 3 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* concerning medical missions around the world, its present-day evolution and the various success stories of transitions and current strategies.

Medical missions is such a key in (See 'Letters,' page 11)



"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 courtesy of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, FBC Auburn and Heflin Baptist Church

Midweek services and activities at churches in Alabama provide opportunities for people of all ages to gather in an informal setting.

'True fellowship'

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Midweek services still prove to be important for relationship building, missions education

For Tina Riddle and her family, attending Wednesday night services is a standing commitment regardless of what else is going on in their busy lives.

"We are always telling our children to put God first, but it's much harder to do," said Riddle, a member of Heflin Baptist Church in Cleburne Baptist Association. "We schedule time for practices and ballgames, so going to church on Wednesday nights is one way to show our children how to put God first."

Wednesday gatherings began in the late 19th century as lay-led, midweek prayer services in frontier churches that had itinerant pastors, according to Bill Leonard, professor of church history and Baptist studies at Wake Forest University School of Divinity in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"It was a kind of evangelical Protestant vespers service," he said.

Denominational churches adopted the format in the early 20th century and added music programs, congregational meals and, sometimes, preaching. Within a few years Wednesdays had become the time when different ministries within congregations would meet.

In Alabama Baptist life, the midweek service, usually held on Wednesday night, remains a strong tradition. However, the structure of the time has changed, according to Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"In the past, churches were having another worship service on Wednesday night, but that trend is not growing or continuing," Hibbs said.

Instead, midweek services in most churches include time for some combination of Bible study, prayer and music rehearsal organized by groups for children, youth and adults, often simultaneously. Fellowship is a vital part of the time as well.

"One of the dynamics of the Wednesday

night service is that it's a more intimate time," Hibbs said. "Midweek services provide a time of relationship building for the core group of the church."

Riddle said when she and her family first began attending Heflin Baptist, they only attended Sunday morning services.

"I enjoyed it, but I didn't really 'know' anyone. It wasn't until we started on Wednesday nights that I began to know the wonderful people of my church," she said. "I think the informality is more conducive to building relationships instead of just acquaintances."

Part of the midweek tradition at many churches is the fellowship meal, which Leigh Anne Armstrong, interim minister to students at First Baptist Church, Auburn, in Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, said is her favorite part of that time.

Multi-generational

"As a long-time participant, I see the midweek service as unique in that it offers a fellowship time that is unstructured and multi-generational," Armstrong said. "There is sacredness in gathering with brothers and sisters in Christ around a table and redeeming an hour from a hectic week."

First, Auburn, holds its midweek service on Thursday nights, a tradition that started decades ago when Wednesday night meetings of Greek organizations at Auburn University conflicted with the church schedule.

Today churches compete with sports and school activities for time on weeknights and even on Sundays, a conflict Hibbs sees as a "byproduct of the secularization of our society."

In her work with students and their families Armstrong regularly encounters the conflict between church attendance and extracurricular activities.

"Families are so busy these days, with no day, not even Sunday, set apart as sacred when

it comes to dance, sports and other activities," Armstrong said. Still, she said, "I encourage anyone who asks to not take this opportunity for true fellowship for granted."

In addition to competing for time with non-church activities, ministry leaders also must decide how best to organize the time they have. Hibbs said many churches have reduced or eliminated time for children and youth choir rehearsals on Wednesday evenings to give more time to other activities.

"The implication in that reduction of time is that there will be fewer people who will be worship leaders in the future," Hibbs said. "That's a concern to me."

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, sees many churches incorporating multiple programs for children and youth as well.

"For the most part, missions education is still Wednesday or Sunday night, but whereas in the past, it might have been an hour, now it's 45 minutes or even 30. There's certainly more sharing of time," she said.

McIntosh is not discouraged though. Even as culture continues to infringe upon the limited time that churches have for ministry, she said Alabama Baptists continue to focus on their mission — the Great Commission.

"Alabama Baptist churches for the most part have a very good understanding of the Great Commission, and because of that, they continue to raise up our preschoolers, children, youth and adults to be Great Commission leaders," McIntosh said.

Given the small amount of time allotted to church life each week, the challenge for churches is to focus on what is most valuable.

"If you want children to understand the value of missions and worship, you begin to guide them when they are young," McIntosh said. "We only have so much time, and we want to know what we do in that time makes a difference." (ABP contributed)

Withholding gospel from Jews out of fear is 'anti-Semitic,' worker says

(continued from page 1)

faith in Jesus, he or she was expected to leave all traces of Jewish identity behind, he explained. For example, they were often told to trade in their biblical Jewish holidays for Christian ones.

But in the growing Messianic movement Jews are "very secure in their identity as Jews and as Jews who believe in Jesus,"

Martin said. "In the heart of the movement is an expression that says, 'Yes, we believe in Jesus, but as a testimony to what God has promised, we have to maintain our identity as Jews. But our identity is in the Jewish Messiah.'"

And that identity is important to Jews as a continuing witness to God's faithfulness in bringing the promised Messiah, an identity they want to live out in front of other Jews, he said. "They are not trying to get out of their people but stay among them and proclaim the message there."

And, Martin said, the message is taking root in Israel and among the diaspora, the term given to the portions of a people group scattered from their homeland and spread around the world.

The biggest Jewish diaspora population is in the United States. About 6 million Jews call the U.S. home, only slightly less than the population of Israel. Significant diaspora

populations also live in France, Russia, Argentina, South Africa, Germany and other countries, Martin said.

"What we see now is that, as in the time of Paul, there are naturally occurring networks flowing to the diaspora. That [social] network is critical to Jewish work and Jewish life — it carries Jewish life from Israel to the diaspora," he said.

Messianic work will flow the same way, he explained. The flow of ideas from Israel to the diaspora is mimicking the first-century spread of the church "more than ever before," he said.

Right now the gospel isn't widely accepted as a Jewish idea, even though the New Testament is firmly written from a Jewish mindset. But it is becoming more of a dialogue, he said.

"Within future years, it (the gospel) will become a trend for the Jewish lifestyle and dialogue as people

do see that Jesus was Jewish, the disciples were Jewish and the New Testament was Jewish," Martin said. "They must see it as a Jewish idea and not just as a Gentile idea."

And they must see that a person can be a Jew and still believe in Jesus, he said.

"Jews are still trying to understand who Jews are. Can you be Jewish and be atheist? Can you be Jewish and believe in Buddha? Most would say yes," Martin said. "But the

one thing a large number of Jews have always agreed on is that you can't be Jewish and believe in Jesus."

But slowly that idea is beginning to change, he said. Numerous Messianic congregations have sprung up among the diaspora, and their ideas are flowing back to Israel too, he added.

But they also face different concerns.

"They are more worried about anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish attacks," he said, noting that in Argentina there have been several bombings. "It enforces the idea many hold that Jews cannot protect themselves anywhere but in their own country."

Fear is still fresh from the Holocaust when 6 million Jews — around the same number as the entire Jewish population of Israel today — were killed by Nazi Germany during World War II, Martin said.

Many moved to U.S.

The Holocaust had a lot of effects, one of which was that the United States became the destination for Jews moving away from Europe, he said. "It also caused many Jews to distrust those from outside their community."

But it also has caused some fear for Americans who want to share the gospel with Jews, Martin said. Many know that Jews have been persecuted in the name of Jesus throughout history by those calling themselves Christians, and they think, "We can't share Jesus with them," he said.

And it is common for Jews to be offended when Christians try to share Jesus with them, he said.

"But we can't exclude them. God loves the whole world and that includes Jews," Martin said. "The gospel was given 'to the



Reuters photo

Jews in Argentina commemorate the anniversary of the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires.

Jew first and then to the Greek.' If we don't share with them, then we are anti-Semitic."

If we love somebody, we share with them, otherwise "we can comfort them to an eternity without the Messiah," he said.

But how does sharing the gospel with Jews happen effectively and with the least chance of offense?

According to "Barriers & Bridges," a resource of the North American Mission Board, a Christian should take time to build relationships before engaging Jews with the gospel message.

It also recommends that believers focus on Jesus, not on Christianity. Talk about His life, His claims to be the Messiah and the way He fulfills Old Testament prophecy. Also share your testimony of your own faith in Christ.

"Share what we believe is true, but don't believe that you can force anything on anyone," Martin said. "Encourage Jews to ask God to guide them to what is true and right, and then pray for the Holy Spirit to work in their lives."

A short video highlighting the barriers between Christians and Jews and how to overcome them also is available at <http://vimeo.com/45358520>.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons. ■■

Judaism in Alabama

(by county)

(county, type, number of congregations, adherents, % of population)

Calhoun: Reform Judaism / 1 / 113 / .1%

Dallas: Reform Judaism / 1 / 19 / .1%

Houston: Reform Judaism / 1 / 143 / .2%

Jefferson: Conservative Judaism / 1 / 1,774 / .3%

Jefferson: Orthodox Judaism / 2 / 375 / .1%

Jefferson: Reform Judaism / 1 / 1,971 / .4%

Lee: Reform Judaism / 1 / 124 / .2%

Madison: Conservative Judaism / 1 / 173 / .1%

Madison: Reform Judaism / 1 / 473 / .3%

Mobile: Conservative Judaism / 1 / 359 / .1%

Mobile: Reform Judaism / 1 / 602 / .2%

Montgomery: Conservative Judaism / 1 / 537 / .3%

Montgomery: Reform Judaism / 1 / 459 / .3%

Tuscaloosa: Reform Judaism / 1 / 178 / .2%

Source: 2010 U.S. Religious Census;
Religious Congregations & Membership Study

Tips for sharing with Jews

Learn the context and become richer for it.

"To understand where Jews are coming from you need to understand how to approach things from the Old Testament — the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), the writings and the prophets," said Ben Martin, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among Jews. "It's the context in which Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus."

Once you learn to share within that context, "you are richer for it," he said.

Understand the difficulty Jews have.

"There has been a barrier between Christians and Jews throughout history," Martin said, starting with Jesus Himself and continuing through the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust.

"Ask them humbly to consider what's true," he said. "Not Christianity — they think of persecution or Catholicism, which they consider idolatry."

Instead, he said, ask them to consider Jesus.

"Scripture is authoritative in people's lives," Martin said. "Ask them to look at Moses, the prophets and the writings to see the revealed Messiah. Look with your heart, and you will see."

Display the sincerity and love of Jesus Christ.

"They are people, and they meet people as any other people," Martin said. "Build relationships with them with a sincerity of heart and not as a 'Jewish scalp' to earn for the Kingdom."

People can introduce people to the Messiah and let Him change them, he said.

Messianic leader offers training, help for churches

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jews in Alabama and the rest of the United States haven't heard the gospel enough, and that's because sharing with them is "hard," said Ric Worshill, president of the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship (SBMF).

Often the reason it is hard, he said, is because believers do not understand how to share with Jews.

"A lot of times people who are trying to share the gospel with them are trying to use the New Testament, and Jews don't believe that book is inspired of God," Worshill said.

It's best to start with the Old Testament promises they believe in and show how Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of those promises, he said.

Before Worshill became a Christian, he was like the Saul of the Jews, he said. "I was brought up to be an anti-missionary, to bring Jews who went to Jesus back to Judaism."

But one day a Christian girl who eventually became his wife began talking to him about the Old Testament laws about sacrificial atonement for sin. She asked him how Jews atone for sin now, as they haven't sacrificed at the temple since it was destroyed in the first century.

"I began to think about how a Sanhedrin council had decided at that point it was OK not to sacrifice anymore (even though the law hadn't changed), and that going to the synagogue was never meant to count as a sacrifice for sin," Worshill said.

Messianics in Alabama

Eventually he began to consider Jesus.

Worshill said resources abound for Alabama Baptist churches and believers who want to learn more about how to share the gospel effectively with Jews.

The SBF, its member congregations and fellowships, and partner organizations offer training for churches on a regular basis, and many of these resources are local.

Two SBF fellowships call Alabama home — Beth El Shaddai in Bessemer and Beth Messiah Messianic Congregation in Tarrant.

"Contact us at SBF, and we can help connect you with resources," Worshill said. SBF cooperates with a number of ministries in order to empower and mobilize churches to share the gospel with Jews.

It's an urgent need, he said, as "the fields are white unto harvest, but we don't have enough workers out there to share the gospel."

Worshill asked Alabama Baptists to pray that God will send more workers into the field to share and that He will open more Jewish hearts to the truth of Jesus.

For more information or to ask about training, contact Worshill at sbmf@sbmessianic.net or visit www.sbmes-sianic.net.



Jews who worship Jesus as Messiah may have legal problems moving to Israel even though the Israeli Law of Return grants any Jew or family member of a Jew the legal right to Israeli citizenship.

IMB photo

Messianic Jews find returning to Israel to be major legal battle

A young Jewish woman and her mother tearfully plead for Michael Decker's help. They have arrived at the Israeli lawyer's office after a several hour-long interrogation by the Israeli Ministry of the Interior.

The mother had left the United States to come to Israel under the Israeli Law of Return (called "*aliyah*"), which grants any Jew or family member of a Jew the right to immigrate to Israel and receive citizenship. But, Decker said, when the Interior Ministry — which oversees citizenship and immigration in Israel — found out she and her daughter were both Messianic Jews, it not only denied the mother citizenship but revoked her daughter's citizenship as well.

Neither woman, Decker said, could legally work in Israel because of their belief in Jesus as the promised Messiah, and they had already sold everything they owned in the United States.

Accused of 'stealing souls'

"How can you not help someone like that?" said Decker, a partner in the law offices of Yehuda Raveh & Co. Decker also serves as senior legal adviser to the Jerusalem Institute of Justice.

For years, Decker — an Israeli believer — is among a small cadre of Israeli lawyers who have battled what some may see as a puzzling phenomenon: A government that relies on the global support of evangelical Christians has an Interior Ministry that, by Decker's assessment, is fighting tooth and nail against Jews who believe in Jesus from becoming citizens.

Messianic believers face an already tough hurdle in the Law of Return itself, which was amended in 1970 with religious restrictions that exclude many of them from its immigration and citizenship guarantees. Messianics with certain family and religious histories are able to qualify under the law, but the reality, Decker said, is different. He said the Interior Ministry does everything it can to prevent any Messianics from becoming Israeli citizens, regardless of whether they are legally entitled to do so.

Decker traces most of the trouble to a

powerful Israeli religious organization called Yad L'Achim, comprised of Orthodox Jews who practice the most stringent strain of Judaism. He says Yad L'Achim opposes anything it believes to be a threat to Israel's Jewish identity, including Christians, Muslims and Jews it believes are not religious enough.

"They want to make sure that every Jew remains Jewish according to their definition of Judaism," Decker said.

Decker said Messianic Jews are prime targets for Yad L'Achim, which he said harasses Messianic pastors and suspects Messianics of being missionaries out to "steal Jewish souls."

"Because, to [Yad L'Achim], the Nazis in the Holocaust killed the Jewish people physically, and Christian missionaries are stealing the Jewish soul," Decker said.

"That's why they would consider it a spiritual holocaust, even."

Although ultra-Orthodox Jews are a small minority in Israel, they wield a significant amount of political power.

Israel's parliamentary democracy usually requires several political parties to join together to form a coalition government, with cabinet posts given to each party to secure their support.

A small ultra-Orthodox party called Shas is part of the current Israeli government, with its leader in charge of the Interior Ministry.

Decker described the Shas-run Interior Ministry as allied with Yad L'Achim in keeping Messianic Jews out of the country.

"I'm sure that [those who run the Interior Ministry] have very strong connections with Yad L'Achim," Decker said. "Many ministers and parliament members from within the Shas party probably donate to this Yad L'Achim organization."

Even though Decker won a landmark

2008 Israeli Supreme Court case in which the court determined that Messianic Jews who meet certain family and religious criteria are indeed entitled to citizenship, he said the deck is still stacked against them.

The Interior Ministry will fight every Messianic seeking citizenship all the way to the Supreme Court, Decker said, because they know most Messianics cannot afford

the costs of the legal battle, even if they would win in the end.

Decker helps Messianic believers navigate the legal maze — even if they cannot pay — through his work with the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, an organization that aids the poor and victims of discrimination in Israel.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said what is going on at the Interior Ministry is "clearly religious discrimination."

He urges Southern Baptists to contact their legislators as well as President Obama to ask that this concern be addressed to the Israeli embassy.

Ben Martin, an Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among Jews, said he is grateful that Messianics have the right to battle it out in court and that the media in Israel has the freedom to debate these topics openly.

'A lot of problems'

But, he said, the situation still causes "a lot of problems" for Jews who believe in Jesus.

"I am grateful for the Jerusalem Institute of Justice working to stand up for their rights," Martin said.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Ben Martin's name has been changed for security reasons. (BP, TAB)

"I am grateful for the Jerusalem Institute of Justice working to stand up for their rights."

Ben Martin
Christian worker

Across Alabama's Associations



GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host The 39er's C.L.U.B. (Christians Living Under the Blood!) nondenominational luncheon Feb. 12, 11 a.m. Aaron Bruski of Belief in Motion ministries will speak. For reservations, call 334-684-9617 by Feb. 5. Mike Shirah is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Jason Rodgers** is the new pastor of **First Church, Mount Olive**. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in religion from Samford University in Birmingham, a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Seminary.

He previously served as pastor of Wayside Church, Alexander City. He also served at Lystra Church, Cullman, and Damascus Church, Hanceville. His wife is Rita.



RODGERS

TUSCALOOSA

► **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host The Power Team on Jan. 30–Feb. 3, 7 p.m. nightly. Herb Thomas is pastor of the church.

Alabama Baptist pastor Lyon shares about his impact on Hank Williams' life

Hank Williams used to listen to Henry Lyon on the radio.

You'd think it was the other way around.

When Lyon, pastor of Highland Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, stepped up to the mic at Williams' funeral Jan. 4, 1953, he didn't even know the man in the casket. But Williams, a country music superstar, knew Lyon — from the radio.

One night in his mother's boarding house in Montgomery, Williams was lying in bed listening to Highland Baptist's evening service broadcast live over the airwaves.

When Lyon closed his sermon, Williams told his mother, "That's the man I want to preach my funeral."

So preach it Lyons did.

More than 2,500 people attended the funeral at Montgomery City Auditorium and a crowd of about 25,000 gathered outside. "I cannot preach the funeral of Hank Williams. It has already been preached in music and song on the radio," Lyon said. "When Hank played on his guitar, he played on the heart-strings of millions of Americans."

And when Lyon preached on the radio, Williams listened.

Have you ever been impacted by a radio show, a TV show or a movie? How? *The Alabama Baptist* would love to hear your story. Please email news@thealabama-baptist.org or write us at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. (TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders



William Hugo Parkman

Former IMB missionary dies

William Hugo Parkman, a former Southern Baptist missionary from Valley, died Nov. 20, 2012. He was 92.

Parkman was born Dec. 11, 1919, in Langdale (now known as Valley). He studied business administration at Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), graduating in 1942.

Afterward Parkman enlisted in the Navy, where he served in the Seabees in the Solomon Islands.

Parkman later volunteered for submarine duty. He served as communications officer for the USS Finback, which was then assigned to rescue American pilots shot down by Japanese aviators.

Parkman left the Navy at the end of World War II, entering business in Langdale. There Parkman met Doris McKoy, who became his wife Dec. 31, 1946.

His call to missions came in 1956 after visiting Mexico. The Parkmans signed on with the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board), and moved to Manila, Philippines, in December 1957.

Parkman served as the business manager of the Philippine Baptist Mission, which included acting as a liaison between the mission and the Philippine government. The Parkmans also started a house church that still exists 53 years after its beginning.

In 1983, Parkman began serving as director of Luzon Baptist Camp in Bataan, Philippines; the Parkmans remained there until their retirement in 1984. The Parkmans moved to Decatur, Ga., where they were active at Decatur Baptist Church. They moved to Palmetto, Ga., in 2005 and became members of Palmetto Baptist Church.

Parkman is survived by his wife of 66 years, Doris; six children; 15 grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. (Joseph Rhea)

Bob Pruitt

Alabama Baptist pastor dies

Bob Pruitt spent more than 50 years of his life serving Alabama Baptist churches. He died Dec. 18, 2012, at the age of 79.

Pruitt, who was born in Gadsden, served two terms in the Navy in the 1950s. He married his wife, Millie, and they became members of Bethel Baptist Church, Geraldine.

It was at Bethel Baptist that Pruitt felt God call him to become a pastor. Three days after announcing his desire in 1959 to preach, Bethel asked Pruitt to do just that during a Sunday service. And Bethel later called Pruitt to be its pastor.

He earned his bachelor of arts degree from Sam-

ford University in Birmingham in 1971 and served in the pastoral role at nine other Alabama Baptist churches. He served as the pastor of First Baptist Church, Rainsville, and later as minister to senior adults at First, Rainsville, and First Baptist Church, Crossville, where he was serving at the time of his death.

Greg Corbin, associate pastor of pastoral ministries at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, who served under Pruitt when he was senior pastor at First, Rainsville, said Pruitt was a "very gracious (and) humble man and had a great sense of humor."

Pruitt is survived by his wife of 57 years; three children; eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)

Stuart Calvert

Former Alabama WMU leader dies

Former Alabama Baptist Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) president Stuart Calvert died Jan. 15. She was 78.

Calvert served Alabama WMU as president from 2001 to 2005.

"Stuart was the leader at a very important time with Alabama WMU," said Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU. "She led as the organization changed leadership. Stuart was a woman of great wisdom, discernment, grace and encouragement. All across our state are women whose lives were changed by her leadership and presence."

Calvert also served as a representative on the Alabama WMU board of trustees from 1999 to 2001 and 2005 to 2007. She served on the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions during her presidency. She most recently was serving on the board of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper.

Calvert earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Louisville in Kentucky.

She is survived by her husband, Bob, who is senior pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Albertville; three children and seven grandchildren. (TAB)

Russell D. Wilks

Former Alabama musician dies

Russell D. Wilks sang gospel music throughout his life and loved to lead others in music at church. He died Jan. 10 at the age of 94.

Born in Henagar, Wilks graduated from Valley Head High School, Henagar, in 1937. He began singing in the 1930s and toured the nation with groups such as Stamps-Baxter Rhythmairs, Happy Hitters Quartet and The Noblemen.

He also worked as a construction superintendent with Sullivan, Long & Haggerty in Birmingham.

Wilks served as the music minister at Henagar Baptist Church and as the choir director at Sylvania Baptist Church before retiring in 2010.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Donnie. He is survived by his three children; seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



CALVERT



Photo courtesy of Old Union Baptist Church

NAUVOO'S OLD UNION COMPLETES RENOVATION

Old Union Baptist Church, Nauvoo, celebrates the completion of the renovation of their kitchen and sanctuary. The new fellowship hall was dedicated to Ebb McClendon and Kenny Sudduth (right) for their combined service of approximately 50 years of faithful service. Also pictured are (l to r) Pastor Shawn Morgan, Kelley Morgan and Mary Sudduth.

Church ANNIVERSARIES

FBC Frisco City celebrates centennial

First Baptist Church, Frisco City, kicked off its centennial Oct. 28, 2012, with a meet and greet before its anniversary worship service.

The festivities began in the church's Family Activities Center at 9:15 a.m., where displays were set up for attendees to browse and introductions of special guests and the sharing of testimonies took place. Faye Taylor was recognized as the longest-attending member of the Bethlehem Baptist Association church.

The program then transitioned to the sanctuary at 10:30 a.m., where the Sims Family began the service by providing instrumental music. According to Audrey Jackson, chair of the centennial committee and music director for First, Frisco City, the congregation sang hymns that were popular during the beginning years of the church and connected them with modern songs. Jackson said former music ministers of the church led this portion of the service.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to the church, and a group photo was taken of the entire congregation.

The worship service featured a sermon by Pastor Mark McCullough's son, Matthew McCullough, who serves as a pastor in Nashville.

Matthew McCullough shared about "What Faithful Churches Do: A Beautiful Legacy." Jackson said descendants of charter members also were recognized during the service. An anniversary lunch and a special concert followed.

Mark McCullough noted the church's excitement for the future and acknowledged its legacy and long line of pastors who have been faithful to the Word. "I'm just particularly grateful for the heritage that was highlighted by the celebration ... and the strong foundation the church had from the outset," he said. (Julie Payne)

Jacksonville's Pleasant Valley marks 100 years

October 14, 2012, marked the 100th anniversary celebration for Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

The 10 a.m. worship service was primarily filled with singing and longtime and former members sharing memories of their time at the Calhoun Baptist Association church, according to chairman of deacons Jimmy Littlejohn.

A representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission also presented a plaque during the service to commemorate the church's centennial, and interim pastor Billy Harris shared some remarks to the more than 100 attendees.

One special element of the day, Littlejohn said, was the booklet the anniversary committee compiled of old church photos, photos of former pastors and various other memories of the church titled "Pleasant Valley Baptist Church 100-Year Celebration."

After the service, everyone gathered in the fellowship hall for an anniversary lunch. "It's just a loving fellowship, folks who love the Lord and love the church," Harris said of Pleasant Valley, adding the future of the church is "encouraging."

He said the anniversary was a "time of celebration and renewal of friendships" and an excitement about "what God has done at Pleasant Valley for these 100 years." (Julie Payne)

Valley Grove Baptist holds 75-year celebration

Valley Grove Baptist Church, Danville, marked its 75th anniversary Oct. 21, 2012, with an 11 a.m. worship service.

The service included music as well as testimonials from church members on what the Muscle Shoals Baptist Association church has meant to them. Pastor Wayne Turner delivered the sermon, and a representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a commemorative plaque for Valley Grove Baptist to church member Willard Cole. Cole also led the singing during the worship service, Turner said. Margie Buttons, a former church clerk who also served as a pianist for the church, was recognized. Turner's wife, Brenda, also was recognized for her years of service to Valley Grove. Turner estimated between 120 and 130 people attended the anniversary celebration.

Jim Fiscus, assistant pastor for Old Town Creek Baptist Church, Moulton, then sang for everyone in the sanctuary after lunch. "(He) did a wonderful job," Turner said.

Turner said his vision for the future of Valley Grove is one of continued growth and that people would continue to be saved. (TAB)

'Reaching the unreached'

Pastors value Cooperative Program, survey finds

Southern Baptist pastors have high opinions of the convention's Cooperative Program (CP), according to a study conducted by LifeWay Research.

The survey of 1,066 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) pastors found 81 percent agree the CP fuels an aggressive global enterprise of reaching the unreached people groups around the world. Similarly, 80 percent say the CP provides partnership opportunities for local, state and national missions.

The study also indicates that pastors' support for the CP does have its limits. One in five pastors (19 percent) say the strategies of the SBC entities that receive CP dollars are not moving in the appropriate direction and that SBC entities are not using their contributions effectively. However, the majority (55 percent) agrees the SBC entities supported by the CP are moving in an appropriate direction. And 52 percent say the entities are using their contributions effectively. Seventy-three percent of pastors say the CP supports the ministries and missions valued by their churches.

"As pastors question every dollar they spend, it is not surprising that some are wanting evidence they are being good stewards with their mission dollars," said Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research. This study shows pastors believe the efforts supported by the CP matter. However, "some do not overlook the need for further ministry improvement in the efforts of the SBC entities supported by the Cooperative Program."

Southern Baptist pastors also indicated how closely they agree with the current allocation of national CP funds. The median responses for the entities — International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board (NAMB), six SBC seminaries, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and SBC operating budget — were all within 0.3 percent of the current allocations, which pastors were shown as they answered.

About one in five pastors entered amounts exactly matching current percentage allocations. A majority listed higher percentages for NAMB and at least half listed lower percentages for IMB, SBC seminaries and SBC operating budget.

Nearly 70 percent of SBC pastors agreed with the statement, "The SBC allocation budget places a high priority on penetrating lostness both locally and worldwide."

Pastors also were asked to indicate the priority their church places on 12 missions and ministry efforts funded by the CP. The majority of pastors indicate "sending and supporting overseas missionaries to reach unreached people groups around the world" is the highest priority. Following is the percentage of SBC pastors who rated each CP-funded mission and ministry as essential or high priority:

- ▶ Sending and supporting overseas missionaries — 68 percent
- ▶ Engaging in local ministry projects for evangelism — 65 percent

- ▶ Developing and implementing an evangelism strategy for penetrating lostness in North America — 59 percent
- ▶ Improving the vitality and health of existing churches — 59 percent
- ▶ Educating and training future pastors, missionaries, church planters and other denominational leaders — 57 percent
- ▶ Reaching ethnically and culturally diverse people — 51 percent

- ▶ Promoting an ongoing program of missions education for all ages — 48 percent
- ▶ Engaging in direct international missions — 45 percent
- ▶ Conducting an ongoing program of leadership development — 45 percent
- ▶ Intentional church planting in cities and towns across North America — 44 percent
- ▶ Intentional church planting in large urban centers — 43 percent
- ▶ Providing a Christian perspective and response about social, ethical and public policy issues — 37 percent

"International missions is clearly a rallying point for the Cooperative Program, yet pastors also place a high priority on evangelism efforts in North America."

Scott McConnell
director, LifeWay Research

Cooperative Program, yet pastors also place a high priority on evangelism efforts in North America," McConnell said.

In regard to sending and supporting overseas missionaries, larger churches, with average attendance of 100–249 (42 percent) and 250-plus (47 percent), are more likely to say it is a high priority compared to smaller churches, 0–49 (33 percent) and 50–99 (29 percent).

When asked about engaging in direct international missions projects, differences mainly emerged according to church size. Churches with an average attendance of 0–49 (16 percent) are the most likely to select "not a priority." Churches with 250-plus attendees (53 percent) are the most likely to say it is a "high priority" while those with 0–49 attendees (17 percent) are the least likely to say so.

'1% CP Challenge'

The final question on the survey referred to the "1% CP Challenge," an effort by the SBC Executive Committee to encourage all Southern Baptist churches to raise their CP contributions by 1 percent — age point of their church's undesignated contributions. Nearly 40 percent of pastors had not heard of the 1% CP Challenge. Another 42 percent said they have not accepted the challenge.

Only 7 percent of pastors said their church had accepted the 1% CP Challenge with another 8 percent planning to do so in the next budget year.

Methodology: The survey of 1,066 SBC pastors was conducted April 1–May 11, 2012. Responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution and worship attendance of the churches. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.0 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Passion Conferences

Young people gather at Passion 2013 to worship Jan. 1–4 at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

‘Alive & Well’

Faith in America could have bright future, says Gallup Editor-in-Chief Newport

Despite a deep drop in the number of Americans who identify with a particular faith, the country could be on the cusp of a religious renaissance, said Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of The Gallup Poll.

Grounded in more than a million Gallup interviews, Newport’s new book, “God is Alive and Well,” argues that the aging of the baby boomers, the influx of Hispanic immigrants and the links between religion and health could portend a bright future for faith in America.

He spoke recently to Religion News Service about his Southern Baptist roots, why mainline Protestants need to have more babies and why companies should reward employees who attend church.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Why did you write this book?

A: I think religion is extremely important in America today. All of our research shows that, and I wanted to get empirical data about religion out there rather than just speculation.

We here at Gallup have had a tracking project since 2008. We do 350,000 interviews a year, which is a huge and unique dataset that nobody else has. And personally I grew up in a religious background and always found it interesting.

Q: Wasn’t your grandfather somewhat of a Southern Baptist bigwig?

A: His name was Frank Leavell, and he was one of nine brothers, all born and raised in Oxford, Miss. All, in one way or another, went into religious service. One was a missionary to China, one was a pastor, one was president of New Orleans Baptist seminary. My grandfather was convinced that it is important to reach out to college students and is credited with founding the Baptist Student Union.

Q: And your father was a Southern Baptist theologian and minister. Are you still religious?

A: Yes, I would say that I am religious, but like a lot of people, in a somewhat different way (than my forebears). I moved up to New Jersey and go to a Presbyterian church. I am not sure there are Southern Baptist churches here (in New Jersey), and the Southern Baptist (Convention) itself has changed.

Q: Getting back to your work, what is the single most important trend in American religion today?

A: One trend that I am asked a lot about is the rise of the “nones,” about which there is a huge amount of publicity but which is often misinterpreted. When Gallup asked the question about religious identity back in the 1950s, almost zero would say they have “none.” People would say “Baptist” or “Catholic” even if they were not particularly religious. Now 18 percent of Americans, according to Gallup polls, say they do not have a particular religious identity. That does not mean that 18 percent are atheists — only 5 or 6 percent say they

don’t believe in God — but people are changing how they express their religiosity.

Q: So is the rise of the nones basically a matter of more Americans admitting the truth about their religiosity to pollsters?

A: That’s one hypothesis. Back in the 1950s, 99 percent of people had a religious identity. That was the cultural norm. Some people call it the “dog-tag religion.” Like, if you were raised Catholic but never went to Mass after you left home, but when asked what you would put on your dog tag you’d say “Catholic.” Today, though, Americans are freer from those social norms and express their identity in different ways.

Q: Despite the changes, you say that religion is poised for a renaissance in America.

A: Well, I would not predict it. But it certainly is a possibility that, rather than continuing to decrease, religious identity could increase. We have been analyzing data from 350,000 interviews since 2008, and 2012 showed the lowest increase in the percentage who said they have no religious identity, so that might be leveling off.

“God is Alive and Well” argues that the aging of the baby boomers, the influx of Hispanic immigrants and the links between religion and health could portend a bright future for faith in America.

Religion has been correlated to health, so more people may seek out religion because it is good for them. And Americans are migrating to states that are more religious, which tends to make (the travelers) more religious.

Q: Do other trends point to a religious revival?

A: If you look at age, the baby boomers are approaching 65–85 years old, which we have seen as the most religious age group for decades. It is a reasonable expectation that the huge group of boomers is going to become more religious, and because they are so big, they will make the country more religious in the aggregate.

In addition, the country's increasing Hispanic population tends to be more religious. Religion has been correlated to health, so more people may seek out religion because it is good for them. And Americans are migrating to states that are more religious, which tends to make (the travelers) more religious.

Q: Gallup uses worship attendance as a key barometer of religiosity. But haven't studies shown that Americans often overstate how often they attend religious services?

A: That is an interesting area of inquiry that we have looked at very carefully. That is probably true that people overstate how often they go to church. But it is a generalization. It does not mean that someone attends church 52 weeks a year. But we have found that church attendance is a good surrogate for religiosity. People who report to an interviewer that they attend services often are in fact more religious than others, even if they don't actually attend services as often as they say they do.

Q: In other words, overstating how often you attend church is a good indicator that you think religion is important enough to, ah, fib about?

A: That's exactly right.

Q: Along those lines, Gallup says Southern states are the most religious because lots of Southerners go to church and tell pollsters that faith is important to them. But Southern states also have higher divorce rates, a large number of abortions and an unhealthy amount of obesity — or gluttony, as Christians might say. How do you square that?

A: That is a good question. Basically we are dealing with religion as defined by self-reported identity. I don't get into manifestation of religion in terms of personal behavior in the book. We don't have data on that, but it's an interesting area to look at. Certainly you have people who attend church weekly who still engage in behavior that could be defined as sin. But it's also important to know where that behavior in those states is coming from — the more religious or the less religious (people)?

Q: You write that mainline Protestants are pretty much doing everything wrong in terms of growing their churches. Why's that?

A: For any group to grow, whether it is a country or a church, you have to have more people coming in than going out. For example, the Catholic Church holds its own in terms of percentage of the American population because of the in-migration of Hispanics. But there is no massive in-migration of Protestants. Secondly, there has been no evidence that they have been able to evangelize effectively. And thirdly, one way you grow is to have high fertility rates. Mormons are doing that well

because their theology encourages big families. But Presbyterians, for example, have less children on average (than other Americans).

So, if you look at all the ways churches could grow, the mainline Protestants have not been able to hit the nail on the head with any of them.

Q: Is there any evidence that mainline Protestants' fierce debates over homosexuality are costing them church members?

A: That's an interesting hypothesis that you hear a lot: Nondenominational churches can focus more on active ministry to parishioners, while mainline churches' annual meetings are spent arguing these issues. But the empirical data on that is lacking. It certainly seems to be a viable hypothesis.

Q: You mention that the Catholic Church has held its own thus far but suggest that it faces trouble ahead.

A: That data clearly shows that in-migration of Spanish-speaking people has really slowed down recently with the economy slowing down. On the other hand, Hispanics typically have more children (than other Americans) and many of them are in the fertile age range. Still, it is clear that the Catholic Church cannot count on the same in-migration of Spanish-speaking Catholics that it had over the last 20 years or so.

Q: Why do you propose that the government and companies promote religion as a means to reduce health-care costs?

A: That certainly is controversial. We have separation of church and state in this country. But the correlation between religion and well-being has been established by Gallup and many other organizations. The question is causality: Maybe healthier people choose to be more religious. But it's clear that religious (people) are less of a drain on our mental and physical health systems. So a company may want to give discounts for employees who attend church four or five times a month just as many give discounts for employees who go to the gym. If America were to become more religious, and this is controversial, it would become healthier. (RNS)



Photo courtesy of Passion Conferences
Louie Giglio (left) and Chris Tomlin worship at Passion 2013.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

FBC Cullman pastor Hayes to retire after 29 years

Edwin (Ed) Hayes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman, could not have imagined he would spend his last two years of full-time ministry rebuilding a church. But that is exactly what he did.

When a tornado dealt a direct hit to First, Cullman, on April 27, 2011, it left about \$4 million in damages to the church's buildings. Hayes noted the "huge" process of rebuilding is now complete.

And another chapter is also closing at the church. After more than 29 years as pastor of First, Cullman, Hayes recently announced his retirement. Jan. 27 will mark his last day of service at the church.

Hayes grew up in Oneonta and was licensed and ordained under the ministry of George Allison, who served as Hayes' pastor at First Baptist Church, Oneonta, when Hayes was in high school. Hayes began serving First Baptist Church, Cleveland, in 1963 as a student at Howard College (now Samford University in Birmingham), where he received a bachelor of arts degree in religion and history.

In 1965, he and his wife, Martha, moved to Fort Worth, Texas, where they attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Hayes received a master of divinity degree and his wife earned her religious education diploma.

In December 1969, First Baptist Church, Centre, called Hayes as its pastor. In July 1976, he began serving at First Baptist Church, New Smyrna Beach, Fla. After more than seven years there, he succeeded Rick

Lance, now executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, as pastor of First, Cullman, in November 1983.

During his years of service at the church, Hayes said evangelism and missions have been the primary emphases. First, Cullman, currently has three church members in full-time overseas missionary service.

He noted his time at First, Cullman, has "been a wonderful ministry. It's a flagship church of north Alabama ... with a strong missions emphasis," he said, adding that overseas missions trips that he and his wife have led to countries including Romania, Ukraine and Venezuela have been a major highlight of his ministry at the church.

He holds a doctor of ministry degree in pastoral ministries from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and has served on various committees and boards during his years of ministry.

He said that once he retires, he hopes to stay active in positions such as interim pastor, supply preacher and Bible conference teacher. He and his wife, Martha, have three children and seven grandchildren. First, Cullman, will hold a reception for Hayes on Feb. 10 from 2–4 p.m.

(Julie Payne)



HAYES

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'God is ... at work'

FBC Haleyville reaches community with food pantry ministry

By Anna Keller

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In the seven years that First Baptist Church, Haleyville, has had a food pantry ministry, members have given out tons of food — literally. In fact, the pantry has distributed just over 1 million pounds of food to people in the area, according to James Caldwell of First, Haleyville, who helped start the ministry and remains one of its main volunteer coordinators.

"It's helped so many people — mainly people who are unemployed or elderly," Caldwell said. "God is really at work here."

Caldwell recalled being inspired to begin this ministry while shopping at Sam's Club one day to help stock the church's small inventory of food they kept on hand to give to people in need.

"I thought, 'We should be looking into doing something more than just having a few things in a closet in the hall to give away,'" he said. "I got to talking with some guys at church about it, and they said they'd help me if I planned it."

And so Harvest of Hope was born.

When the pantry first started, the church relied on word of mouth to let the community know about its presence. Initially, Harvest of Hope served about 30 families, but



Photo courtesy of FBC Haleyville

it did not stay that small for long.

"Our area is big in the manufactured housing industry, so we were very affected by the economic downturn in 2008," said First, Haleyville, Pastor Jim Cooley. "At its highest, our unemployment rate rose to 18 percent."

Relevant ministry

As a result, the church's food pantry ministry became even more relevant, soaring to meet the needs of about 400 families per month.

First, Haleyville, wanted to house the pantry in a building outside of their church, and a rental space became available right behind their church building. Thanks to countless donations, the space is well-equipped with necessities such as several deep freezers,

sturdy shelving and a truck to go to and from the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama in Birmingham, which is how the pantry stocks its shelves. The food is distributed on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, and every eligible recipient or family is able to come "shop" once a month.

"There's a worship service before the food is distributed, and that's led by our church's youth minister," Cooley said. "Not only do they give folks groceries, but they also give them a lot of dignity. They carry people's groceries out to their cars, and things like that mean a lot."

Harvest of Hope is completely volunteer-run, and Cooley estimates that about 70 people give

their time to be a part of the ministry. Volunteers tend to either be First, Haleyville, members or people who previously received food from the pantry when they were in need. For a church with 500 active members and about 250 in Sunday School each week, the participation in Harvest of Hope is seen as significant.

"A lot of our folks have found a place of ministry through the food pantry," Cooley said. "For some of the people who might not be public folks teaching and leading the church, this is a real place of ministry for them. Over the years they've built relationships with fellow volunteers and with the people who come each month to get food."

Caldwell said he hopes the ministry will continue to meet needs within the community, perhaps expanding to provide food in alternative ways (such as a backpack program that provides food to kids in need so they will have food over the weekend).

"We just hope we can keep it going, and we'd like it to be as big as it can get," Caldwell said. "It wasn't easy to start with, and we didn't really have a clue what we were doing, but it's grown so much and — in seven years — we've never run out of food."

MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Enon Baptist Church of Morris, Ala., (located in north Jefferson County) is seeking a full-time pastor. Master of divinity preferred with 5-10 years experience as pastor in a Southern Baptist church. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, Enon Baptist Church, 724 Morris-Majestic Road, Morris, AL 35116, or email: secretary@enonbaptist.net.

PASTOR: West Side Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Ala., is accepting resumés until Feb. 15 for a full-time pastor to serve the Lord in the Jacksonville area. Any interested person is requested to submit a resumé to the following address: West Side Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 459, Jacksonville, AL 36265. Electronic responses will be accepted at Donnie_Kelley@hotmail.com.

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

BIVOCATIONAL OR PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR: If interested, send resumé to: Union Grove Baptist Church, 1498 Butler Road, New Market, AL 35761.

FULL-TIME STUDENT/ED PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Hokes Bluff, near Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully receiving resumés. Please send resumés or questions to: fbchb@att.net.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Central Baptist Church in Gardendale is

seeking a part-time youth minister. Email resumés to: bonnie@cbcgardendale.com, or mail to: 4650 Newfound Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117. Visit www.cbcgardendale.com.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR: Spring Valley Baptist seeks part-time children's ministry director with a heart to see children come to know and grow in Christ. Send resumés: P.O. Box 978, Springville, AL 35146, or churchoffice@springvalleybaptistchurch.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

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

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

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MISCELLANEOUS

DONATION OF TWO VANS: Small Southern Baptist congregation seeking donation of two vans for 2013 summer camps travel. Contact J.O. Gatson, 850-698-0571.

Want to know God?

Pastor Ron Ethridge

Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. Without Him, salvation is impossible.

Acts 4:12 says, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

In John 11:25-26, Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Salvation is not about what anyone does or does not do.

It isn't determined by family or religion. It isn't caused by doing good things or following religious teaching. Salvation is determined by whether or not a person has a right relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the only person who has said, "I Am" the way to be saved. All other religious leaders teach things, philosophies, doctrines or what to do to be saved. Only Jesus proclaims, "I am the Way to be saved."

Jesus is not "A" god. Jesus was not a great prophet.

Jesus Christ is God ... Creator ... the Great I Am ... one of the Trinity.

Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a cross to pay for the sin of all who believe, was resurrected on the third day, ascended to heaven and will return to judge all mankind.

But believing those truths won't save anyone. The demons believe and tremble (James 2:19).

Salvation requires a person to admit they deserve condemnation and only through Jesus can they be saved.

Salvation results when a person trusts in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sin. Salvation is so simple and pure, even children can be saved.

Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

Beaver Creek pastor finds joy in bivocational calling

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Thomas Anderson had no idea that his opportunity to supply preach for Beaver Creek Baptist Church, Thomasville, would eventually lead to his call to serve as pastor.

That was almost three years ago, and today God is using Anderson to bring about both numerical and spiritual growth in this small, rural Bethel Baptist Association church.

"It's the best group of people I've ever been around," Anderson, 27, said excitedly. "Anyone who attends the church for the first time

is guaranteed to receive a warm welcome."

The Sunday that Anderson first served as a supply preacher in 2010, less than 20 members were in attendance. In nearly three years, the church has seen attendance on some Sundays in the 30s or 40s.

Increase in attendance

Revival services, Homecoming Sundays, High Attendance Days, a Facebook page and lots of pastoral visitation have helped boost the church's attendance.

The congregation meets on Sundays in the original building

constructed 127 years ago. Bobby Hopper, Bethel Association's director of missions, said Beaver Creek Baptist is "your typical, old, rural church in Alabama, and it's located in an out-of-the-way community. But the church has good, solid and down-to-earth people."

Anderson's call to ministry came while serving in the U.S. Navy from 2004 to 2008.

"When I was stationed in Jacksonville, Fla., I attended First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, and volunteered in the church's youth ministry. The preaching of Jerry Vines and Mac Brunson influenced me greatly," he said.

Anderson's next duty station was Norfolk, Va., where he attended First Baptist Church, Norfolk, and was involved in the church's military ministry.

These two large-church experiences brought about spiritual renewal in Anderson's walk with the Lord and later led to his call to preach.

"My call wasn't all that surprising," he said. "When I was a kid I was told

many times I would probably be a preacher or a politician."

Anderson, in his first pastorate, serves bivocationally at Beaver Creek, working 45 hours each week in an auto parts store. He does not live in the community near Beaver Creek, so he drives more than 90 miles round-trip on Sundays.

"I thought being a pastor was easy," Anderson said. "I got a rude awakening. It's hard work. Anyone can preach a sermon, but it takes a special quality to be an effective pastor, and that is love for your people."

As Anderson has shown love for the people of Beaver Creek, the mostly older congregation has reciprocated.

"I did not know how much a church could love you back," Anderson admitted.

Pete Bedsole, a member of Beaver Creek for 55 years and current deacon chairman, appreciates Anderson's ministry.

"He's a quality young man," Bedsole said. "He gives his best.



Photo courtesy of Thomas Anderson

'SOLID' CHURCH — Thomas Anderson (right) speaks with Beaver Creek's oldest deacon, Pete Bedsole. Bedsole says Anderson is 'a quality young man.'

When he preaches, even a child can understand him."

Elizabeth Etheridge, a 67-year member, regards Anderson as a "home boy" and has known his family for years.

"We're excited to have him as our pastor," she said. "He is very dedicated."

'God is with me'

Anderson expressed his dedication to God this way: "I made a promise to keep the Lord first. I live by Psalm 23:4. Sometimes I find myself in a dark valley, but God is with me. So I stay upbeat and maintain my faith in God. People don't want to follow a complainer and whiner."

Anderson has guided the church in making some improvements to its physical facilities.

He spoke with pride about the church's new stained glass windows representing the stages of Christ's life.

"For a small, country church, things are going well here," he said.

Letters

(continued from page 2)
opening the door of peoples' hearts because it so dramatically portrays the unconditional love of Christ to those who have never experienced this level of care for their whole person: body, soul and mind.

In particular, I profoundly thank you for running the IMB article about the Centro Medico Bautista in Asuncion, Paraguay, where I served for 12 years and continue to be involved since our departure in December 1998. I can strongly attest that God's grace and mighty hand continues to protect and

guide this effective ministry in the heart of South America.

Marlin Harris
Marbury, Ala.

DISASTER RELIEF

While watching the TV/radio show "Imus in the Morning" recently, Don Imus, host of the show, had Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey on and asked him who had been the most helpful after the storm. Guess what the governor said? First, he named The Salvation Army and then he named the Southern Baptists. He said that they provided hot food, etc. It just made me thankful to be a Southern Baptist and extra thankful for those men and women that make it their mission to go wherever they are needed to help others in times of disaster.

Gail Speigner
Enterprise, Ala.

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January Bible study

An in-depth look at Holy Week • 4 of 5 in a series

Many reasons for Jesus Christ's Good Friday sacrifice

In our survey of the events of Holy Week we have come to the day called Good Friday. The name is ironic. Friday was a terrible day because on it the Son of God was executed. But it was a good day too, because God used Jesus' experiences on that day as raw material and from them made the salvation of the world. It is a paradox. "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1:25).

Friday

The day began with Jesus' arrest in the garden where He had been praying. Peter attempted to defend Him with a sword, but Jesus reprimanded him (Luke 22:51). Shortly thereafter Peter's courage failed him. In front of a teenage girl he denied that he knew Jesus. When the enormity of his betrayal dawned on Peter, he wept bitterly (Luke 22:54-62).

Luke records four trials of Jesus: by the council, by Pilate, by Herod and then by Pilate again (Luke 22:66-23:25). The principal charge against Jesus was that He claimed to be the Messianic King. To the Jews this sounded like blasphemy. To Pilate it sounded like insurrection. But Pilate knew it was untrue so he tried repeatedly to release Jesus. Finally he bowed to pressure from the crowd and sentenced Jesus to death. Jesus was crucified between two criminals, one of whom believed Jesus was the Messiah. On Jesus' cross a sign was posted that said, "This is the king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38).

It is conventional to refer to the things Jesus said while He was on the cross as "the seven last words." Luke records three of these sayings, none of which appears in the other Gospels. Jesus prayed for His executioners, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). He told the criminal who believed in Him as Messiah, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). As He was dying Jesus prayed, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Matthew and Mark record a fourth saying of Jesus from the cross: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34). Only John records the three other sayings. To His mother Mary and to the beloved disciple, presumably John, He said respectively, "Woman, here is your son" and "Here is your mother" (John 19:26-27). Then He said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). As He died He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Luke records that after Jesus had died "a good and righteous man named Joseph" received permission from Pilate to bury Jesus' body. Because the Sabbath was about to begin, the preparation of Jesus' body had to be postponed until the Sabbath ended (Luke 23:50-56).

That is how the first Good Friday ended. What did it all mean?

By Fisher Humphreys

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



In terms of justice, its meaning is clear enough. Jesus was falsely accused and wrongly condemned by the council and wrongly executed on Pilate's orders. Good Friday was a gross miscarriage of justice.

In terms of individuals' personal relationships with Jesus, Good Friday included an appalling betrayal by Judas and a pathetic denial by Peter. It also included a loyal family member, Jesus' mother Mary, and a loyal disciple, presumably John. It included a criminal who believed Jesus was the Messiah and asked to be remembered by Him in His Messianic kingdom. It included faithful women who stood ready to prepare Jesus' body for burial, and an honorable man who provided a tomb for the burial.

To Jesus, Good Friday was an act of obedience to His Father. He experienced horrific physical pain, and His emotional and spiritual agony may have been even worse. Despite the intensity of His suffering He asked God to forgive His tormenters. This morally luminous prayer points to a way of life that is more generous than justice in that it shows grace and kindness toward those who hurt us. Years later Peter wrote that Jesus left you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." When He was abused, He did not return abuse; when He suffered,

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!" And having said this He breathed His last.

Luke 23:46

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

He did not threaten; but He entrusted Himself to the One Who judges justly.

But Peter saw more in Jesus' death than an example, for he then added: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 1:21-24).

The idea that Jesus died to free the world from sin originated not with Peter but with Jesus who said that His dying was a way of serving others. During His public ministry He had taught His followers that the right way to exercise leadership and to achieve greatness is not by dominating other people but by serving them. He said that this was what He Himself did (see Luke 22:24-27). And on at least one occasion He gratuitously added: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). A ransom is a means of liberation; Jesus said that He could free others by dying for them.

This brings us to the theological meaning of Good Friday. What did Jesus achieve by His sacrifice? The writers of the New Testament interpreted the meaning of Jesus' obedience, suffering, body, blood, cross, death and resurrection in more than a dozen different ways. Today the most popular interpretation is that Jesus experienced the divine punishment for human sins and therefore human beings will not be punished for their sins. This interpretation appears in passages such as the one from 1 Peter quoted above.

Here are 10 other interpretations found in the New Testament. By His resurrection Jesus inaugurated a new era in the relations between God and human beings (Acts 2:16-21, 24, 31-33). He paid a price to liberate human beings (1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23). He destroyed evil (Col. 2:14, Heb. 2:14-15). He is the Good Shepherd who died protecting His flock (John 10:11-18). He was a gift offering pleasing to God (Eph. 5:2). His death was a Passover sacrifice that frees human beings from bondage to sin (1 Cor. 5:7). It was a guilt offering that cleanses from sin (1 John 1:7, 2:1-2). It was a Yom Kippur sacrifice that atones (Heb. 9:1-14, 22). His suffering was an example that can transform one's moral life (Phil. 2:5-11, 1 John 4:10-11). In life and in death, Jesus providing a life-giving revelation of the boundless love of God (1 John 4:9-10).

Why did the writers of the New Testament provide so many interpretations of Jesus' sacrifice? Presumably it was because multiple interpretations are needed in order to portray the perfect salvation that Jesus achieved on the first Good Friday and Easter Sunday. When God has given us so many interpretations, it probably isn't a good idea to settle for just one or two. ☞

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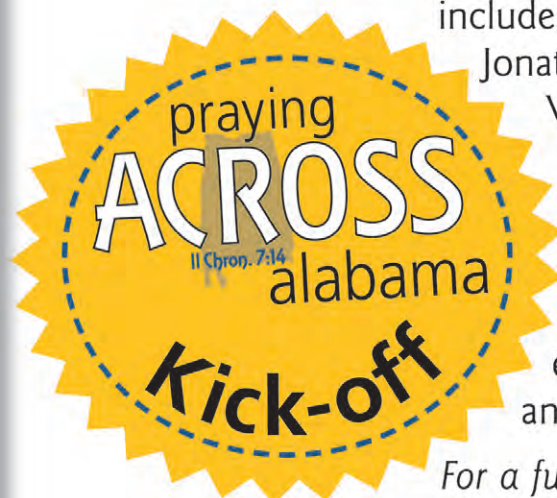
Fred Luter, president, Southern
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For more information call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, or email Amy Nelson at anelson@alsbom.org.

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Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Cuban government 'attacks' Christians, pastors

HAVANA, Cuba — Carlos Lamelas knows firsthand the diabolical nature of attempts by Cuban authorities to cripple Christianity on the Communist isle.

Refusing to allow government interference in the internal affairs of his congregation, Lamelas was charged with "human trafficking" (allegedly helping Christians to flee the island). He spent four months in jail and endured years of unjust treatment before leaving Cuba as a political refugee in 2011.

Like many pastors, Lamelas initially ran afoul of the government simply for effectively proclaiming Christ. "When a religious leader attracts a popular following, the G-2 (State Security) mobilizes a team of psychologists to do a psychiatric evaluation and determine if he can be coerced," Lamelas said. "They will launch a campaign to gather incriminating evidence against him, dispatch young women who try to seduce him or peddlers to offer him black market goods. In other words, they are going to entice him to commit some legal or moral offense."

Pressure from the international Christian community persuaded Cuban authorities to release Lamelas and eventually drop the false charges against him, but many Christians have not fared so well. One Christian aid and advocacy group found a sharp increase in violations of religious freedom by the administration of Raul Castro in 2012.

U.K.-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) counted 120 religious rights violations on the island last year, compared with 30 in 2011. Hundreds of people were affected, with some cases involving entire churches and denominations.

Sudan bombings kill more Christians at Christmas

JUBA, South Sudan — Non-Arab Christians in Sudan's Nuba Mountains said they feel forgotten after Sudanese air forces killed at least 11 of the faithful in bombings before and after Christmas, according to area sources.

Following bombings of non-Arab civilians in Christian villages in Sudan's South Kordofan state Dec. 18–26, the ethnic Nuba Christians are praying for a change of government in Khartoum, said a church leader from the state who recently visited Juba.

"We are surprised why the international community is so silent about the killing in South Kordofan," said the church leader, who requested anonymity.

On Dec. 26 the Sudanese Air Force dropped nine bombs in Al Dar village in Buram County killing two Christian women — 70-year-old Kuku Tia and 45-year-old Aisha Tutu Tolodi.

The same attack struck a different Christian village, Um Serdiba in Buram County, where two Christian children were killed instantly. They were identified as Rehab Adam Alfol, 8, and her 4-year-old sister, Najaha Adam Alfol.

On Dec. 18, five people from one family were killed when a Sudanese airplane dropped a bomb in Eire village that landed on a Christian family's home.

Since South Sudan split from Sudan in a referendum in 2011, ethnic Nuba peoples in Sudan's South Kordofan state believe the government's goal of quashing Sudan People's Liberation Army-North rebels also is meant to rid the area of non-Arab peoples and Christianity.

Christians in India fear returning home after attack

MUMBAI, India — Hindu extremists in India's Maharashtra state recently assaulted Christians who still remained after a previous attack on believers. In the first incident, they attacked Christians because they refused to honor a tribal deity — violence that led many to flee their homes, Morning Star News (MS) sources said.

In the second attack, as police stood by watching, about 100 club-bearing Hindu extremists disrupted worship at the house of Ravindra Shankar Ander in Tamsai village, Thane District, India, and kicked, slapped and beat those present with their fists, Sainath Amboraote told MS by phone.

The extremists did not use their wooden clubs as they did in the previous attack in late December.

The more than 100 Christians who fled from the area are afraid to return to their homes after the attacks.

CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Alabama Power Company Foundation Gives to Judson College:** The Alabama Power Company Foundation recently presented a \$100,000 check to Judson College. "We are grateful for the support of Alabama Power for our new nursing program," said college President David Potts.



Photo by Bill Mathews

Pictured are (l to r) David Potts; Aubrey Carter of Alabama Power Company and Terry Morgan, vice president for institutional advancement at Judson.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Invites Students to Visit Day:** The University of Mobile invites prospective students to UMobile Visit Day on Feb. 15, with the opportunity to earn a \$2,000 Visit Scholarship.

Register now for UMobile Visit Day at www.umobile.edu/visit or call Enrollment Services at 251-442-2222.

Activities begin at 8:30 a.m. and include a campus tour, a class period in the student's chosen field of study and opportunities for individual conversations with faculty and staff.

► **Spring Semester Brings Changes to University of Mobile Campus:** Spring Semester 2013 begins with several changes to the University of Mobile campus. These changes include the relocation of Ram Deli, a new LED sign used to communicate campus events, expansion of the J.L. Bedsole Library and improvements to the tennis courts. Other changes include shortened hours for the University Fitness Center and continued construction on the men's baseball locker room.

For more information, visit www.umobile.edu.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Prof Honored for Innovative Teaching About Facebook Personality Clues:** Samford University Assistant Professor of Psychology Jack Berry was honored with The Frank Costin Memorial Award for Excellence for his poster presentation at the National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP) Jan. 3–6. Berry's poster described "A Classroom Activity Illustrating Big Five Personality Judgments from Facebook Cues."

The award recognizes the poster judged by institute faculty as best promoting quality teaching methods and carries a certificate, a check for \$250 and a complimentary registration at a future NITOP conference.

► **Samford and Birmingham Public Library Sponsor Civil Rights Movement Events:** Samford University and the Birmingham Public Library will sponsor a series of events this spring in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement.

"The Year of Birmingham" will reflect on events of 1963, and the turbulent battle for freedom and equality. Birmingham is now recognized as a symbol of both racial intolerance and racial reconciliation.

On Jan. 23, Samford sponsored the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Lecture, "Every New Generation: Immigrants, Society and the Law in the American South," presented by Isabel Rubio at Ar-

lington Auditorium of the Birmingham Public Library.

The upcoming schedule:

February 5 — "Ethnic Notions," film and discussion on racial stereotypes, Brock Forum in Samford's Dwight Beeson Hall, 3:30 p.m.

February 19 — "Montgomery to Memphis," film and discussion, Brock Forum in Samford's Dwight Beeson Hall, 3:30 p.m.

March 5 — "Who Speaks for Birmingham?" film and discussion, Brock Forum, 7 p.m.

April 12 — "This City Isn't Dead Yet: Temple Emanu-El and Civil Rights in Birmingham," a lecture by Samford history department chair Jonathan Bass, Temple Emanu-El, 5:40 p.m.

May 1 — "Crisis," documentary film and discussion about George C. Wallace and his stand at the school house door, Brock Forum.

For more information on the events, contact Bass at 205-726-4133 or email sjbass@samford.edu.

► **Samford to Host Karen Kingsbury:** Karen Kingsbury, best-selling author of inspirational Christian fiction, will speak at the Samford University Legacy League Scholarship Luncheon on Jan. 31. Kingsbury has written more than 50 novels and has more than 20 million books in print.



KINGSBURY

Kingsbury's novel "Loving," released in March 2012, was ranked No. 1 on *The New York Times* best-sellers list the first week it was released. Also in 2012, she released "Coming Home," which ranked No. 5. Her newest book is "The Bridge," released in October 2012.

The luncheon will be at Vestavia Country Club at 11:30 a.m. For reservations, visit www.samford.edu/legacyleague or call 205-726-2247.

Planned Parenthood sets record for abortions

Planned Parenthood has set a record for the number of abortions in its clinics, according to its newly released annual report.

"Americans are sick and tired of underwriting the nation's largest abortion business," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List.

The country's No. 1 abortion provider said its affiliates performed 333,964 abortions during 2010–11, the most recent year

for which statistics are available. The previous yearly record for Planned Parenthood clinics was 332,278 in 2009.

Planned Parenthood also established a record for funds received from federal, state and local governments. It received \$542.4 million in government grants and reimbursements during the latest fiscal year.

Those public funds were nearly half of Planned Parenthood's \$1.2 billion in total revenue for the year. The organization's revenue

outpaced expenses by \$87.4 million.

"Planned Parenthood has spent much of the last few years demanding that taxpayers add millions more to their coffers, citing their nonprofit status and so-called focus on women's health," Dannenfelser said.

The organization's affiliates made only 2,300 adoption referrals during the year, which means they performed about 145 abortions for every adoption referral.

(BP)



Photo courtesy of Gerry Goodstein

The demon Screwtape (right), played by Max McLean, discusses the art of temptation with his assistant, Toadpipe, during the stage production of C.S. Lewis' 'The Screwtape Letters.'

The Screwtape Letters

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Stage production proves to be convicting, life-changing experience

Take something really good, then twist it just a little.

And then things go from bad to worse, from heaven to hell.

"It's what Paul meant when he wrote that we must not be ignorant to his (the devil's) devices. Satan takes what is good and manipulates it for his own purposes," said Max McLean, co-creator and director of the stage production of C.S. Lewis' "The Screwtape Letters."

Manipulating the good is the primary strategy of the demon Screwtape, a fictional character Lewis created who serves as Satan's chief psychiatrist.

"When Screwtape is talking to Wormwood (a junior demon) about the best way to bring your patient into damnation, he says to use all these tiny simple things," McLean said.

They might seem to be small sins, he said, and "people think, 'Oh, they won't hurt.' But Screwtape tells Wormwood, 'Do remember that all that matters is that you separate the man from the Enemy (God).'"

Spiritual warfare

Edge the man away from the light — that's the real message of Screwtape, McLean said. And the message of "The Screwtape Letters" is to know the depth of manipulation that goes on in spiritual warfare, he said.

"One of the great successes of the play and of the book is that although Screwtape is creepy, he's so good at his job that you begin to admire his talent and his commitment," McLean said. "He's really all in."

The play is set in Screwtape's psychiatry suite in hell, an "eerily beautiful office."

"Its motif is subtle reminders of death, yet it's very elegant," much like Screwtape himself, McLean

explained. "He's a liar, he's deceiving. He wants to lure you into his trap."

McLean should know — he's been playing Screwtape ever since he and Jeff Fiske created the production a few years ago. In 2010, McLean and others performed "The Screwtape Letters" 309 times at the Westside Theatre in New York City. The production is in its third year of touring.

McLean has a deep voice and a way about him that the *Boston Globe* called "silky" and "viperish." His voice hums over the lines as Screwtape coaches his demon nephew, Wormwood.

"He's a larger-than-life character," and playing him is fun, McLean said. "It's a constellation of ideas you'll find nowhere else ... and you get to tap into those proud, arrogant and seductive emotions that you better not (use) in real life."

The play is funny, which people find surprising, he said.

"It's interesting humor, the humor that emerges when you see yourself ... you laugh because it's uncomfortable. You think, 'Oh my goodness, Screwtape really knows me,'" he said.

The spiritual aspect of being inside Lewis' classic is "entirely good," he said.

"It starts as laughter, but it's provocative and makes you think. For some people, it becomes a convicting experience," McLean said. "For many, it has become a life-changing experience."

It has a broad appeal, it engages nonbelievers and it encourages believers not to be ignorant of how evil works, he said. "It's good for the soul."

McLean's troupe will perform "The Screwtape Letters" twice Jan. 26 in Birmingham at the BJCC Concert Hall. For these productions, Brent Harris will play the role of Screwtape.

For more information, visit screwtapeonstage.com.

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Union's Dockery to transition to chancellor in 2014

JACKSON, Tenn. — David S. Dockery will transition from president of Union University to the role of university chancellor no later than July 2014, and Union trustees will immediately begin the process of searching for his successor as president.

The announcement comes in the middle of what ultimately will be a three-year transition process at the Jackson, Tenn., campus. Dockery, 60, began talking with the executive committee of Union's board of trustees in the fall of 2011 about the need to start succession planning for the university's future, at which time the board approved a five-member succession planning team. Dockery said discussions with that team and with other members of the board have taken place regularly since then.

Union trustees will appoint a search committee in the near future and will retain the services of an executive search firm to provide counsel in the transition process. As chancellor, Dockery will continue to serve Union as an adviser for the board and the new president for the next several years.

The search process is expected to take about a year.

At the time of his transition in 2014, Dockery will have served as Union's president for 18 and a half years, approximating the tenure of president Robert E. Craig as the longest among Union's 15 presidents since its founding in the 1800s.

He served as chairman of the board for the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, as well as serving on the board for Christianity Today International and Prison Fellowship. Dockery was a member of four recent committees and task force teams in the Southern Baptist Convention and has spoken at major conferences and lectureships at dozens of churches, state conventions, colleges and seminaries.

Michael Lewis to lead NAMB outreach to pastors

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — Florida pastor Michael Lewis is joining the staff of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to lead efforts to build closer relationships between the entity and pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Lewis, pastor of First Baptist Church, Plant City, Fla., will begin working as NAMB's executive director for church revitalization and pastoral relations in February. He will be helping churches mobilize for church planting and church revitalization. In addition, he will look for ways to strengthen pastors, their marriages and their ministries throughout the SBC.

Lewis, a southeast Georgia native, graduated from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., with a master of divinity degree. Lewis previously served churches in South Carolina, Georgia and Texas. In 2005, Lewis was awarded an honorary doctorate from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va.

UK Baptist college names Standing new principal

LONDON — Spurgeon's College, the largest of seven colleges affiliated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, has chosen a new principal to succeed Nigel Wright, who is retiring in August after 13 years in the position.

He will be replaced by Roger Standing, a former pastor who has taught at the London school in the areas of missions, evangelism and pioneer ministry since 2007 and served as deputy principal since 2011. Trained as a Methodist minister before switching to the Baptist faith in 1990, Standing previously was regional minister in the Southern Counties Baptist Association.

Wright announced his retirement in June 2012. When he steps down he will have served the college for 21 years.

CP contributions 1.70 percent above last year's gifts

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee are 1.70 percent above the same period last year.

As of Dec. 31, 2012, gifts received for distribution through the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget totaled \$45,019,758.93, or \$750,555.16 above the \$44,269,203.77 received through December 2011.

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