

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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# Mayhem in Mali

IMB photo  
Around 230,000 Malians have been internally displaced and another 150,000 people left Mali seeking help in surrounding countries.

## Local Christians stand firm during persecution in Mali; most representatives evacuate

**M**ost International Mission Board (IMB) representatives assigned to the West African nation of Mali have left the country due to the continuing conflict between Islamist rebels and Malian military supported by French forces.

John Grayson, an IMB strategy leader in West Africa, said, "Right now we have our personnel spread over a variety of countries because of the situation. All but one family has left the country."

Early last year, Islamist rebels used widespread instability created by warring factions in the north to impose Shariah law in areas where they gained control. They reportedly destroyed church buildings and sought to eliminate any hint of Christianity.

"Our personnel are concerned

for the Malians who are unable to evacuate," Grayson said, particularly "those who are stuck behind in areas controlled by the rebels."

Anna Farmer, a missionary to Mali who plans to return after a meeting in a neighboring country, said, "Believers are being targeted and persecuted."

### Help from France

World Watch Monitor reports that rebel groups controlled more than half of Mali from April last year until the recent intervention by France. France helped the Malian military push the rebels back north.

According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, about 230,000 Malians have been internally displaced and another 150,000 people left Mali seeking help in surrounding countries.

Grayson said IMB personnel "are concerned for believers who have been forced to leave their homes and villages. They are hoping and praying that they can do as much as they can to reach out to their peoples in these surrounding countries where they have now been evacuated."

Despite the fighting, Farmer said, "Many believers are demonstrating their faith and care to their Muslim

neighbors like never before.

"One of our Baptist churches [in Mali] held a prayer vigil at their church last weekend. This church usually runs 20 people. The prayer vigil had [more than] 100 people, including many non-believers. At the church service the next morning, there were at least 40 people."

This situation looks grim, but "we must trust God through it all," Grayson said. "My prayer is that there would be a quick resolution to this situation. I pray that it would be done peaceably."

Grayson added: "Pray for those behind the rebel lines, that they would be faithful and a strong witness for Christ, which also means that they may lose their lives as they remain faithful to Christ. Pray for them to find places and ways to care for their basic needs."

Farmer asks for prayer "that believers can point to Jesus as the only way to true peace."

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (IMB)*



IMB photo  
The West African nation of Mali is in turmoil as the Malian military, backed by French forces, battles Islamist rebels.

# COMMENT

## Getting Back to a Basic

Ask some megachurch pastors about what creates church growth and one will get a variety of answers. Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago, stresses evangelism. He urges fellow pastors to put at least twice as much energy into evangelism as into any other church function. Jack Hayford, founding pastor of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, Calif., emphasizes the vibrant and uplifting worship experience often associated with his Pentecostal background.

Steve Sjogren, acknowledged as the modern-day father of servant evangelism, accentuates Christian service. Sjogren started with 37 people in 1985 in Cincinnati and quickly grew the congregation to more than 6,000 members. John MacArthur — founding pastor of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, Calif., but better known for his radio ministry, Grace to You — always highlights the importance of discipleship.

### Balance in the church

Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., and author of the Purpose Driven series, calls for a balance between the five purposes of the church — evangelism, worship, service, discipleship and fellowship.

While each pastor publicly accentuates a different approach to church growth, all have one thing in common. All emphasize the importance of relationships. All of these churches encourage members to invite family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances to attend worship with them.

One survey found that about two-thirds of the members of churches like these do invite people to their churches. The result is not surprising. Several studies found that about 75 percent of people who visit and then join a church do so because they were invited by someone they knew; not the pastor or staff member but a family member, friend or neighbor.

That statistic reminds me of an experience not too long ago. After preaching in a church one Sunday, I learned my host had been in that congregation only a few years so I asked him what drew him to that particular fellowship. His answer was a clerk in a checkout line.

As he related the story, when he and his wife moved to that community they decided to visit only churches about which members told them



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

good things. That proved harder than anticipated. Members of various churches told them about bad sermons, about problems in the fellowship, about one thing and then another. After six months in the community no one had yet to invite them to a church and backed that invitation up with a personal endorsement about participation in the congregation.

Then came the afternoon in the checkout line of a local store. Reference was made to church and the checkout lady invited the couple to worship with her the next Sunday morning. She spoke of a great pastor, inspiring worship and enjoyable church fellowship.

My host said the next Sunday he and his wife visited that church for the first time and two weeks later they joined.

Again 75 percent of people who join a church do so because they are invited by a family member, a friend or a neighbor just like my host was. It was not the location of the church, not the pastor's sermon, not a technology-filled media campaign that was most important. It was a basic, old-fashioned invitation from someone they knew.

Unfortunately, researcher George Barna reported recently that "fewer people are inviting people to their churches even on high recruitment Sundays like Easter." The reason, he explained, is that people are not impressed with

the contributions of the average church. Like my friend's experience, people talk about the church but not about what is good with the church.

That attitude even spills over into the church's evangelism activities. Again Barna writes, "The report even states that many people are becoming Christians as a result of personal crisis or fear of death and not because people are inviting them."

Church members may say they want to win the lost but their actions indicate they are more about "losing the found," as one pundit put it. If one is unhappy at church, that individual will not only fail to invite people to attend, in time his or her own participation will fade.

Do not misunderstand. Evangelism is still important. Inspiring worship is still important. So is service or ministry and discipleship. But unless all of that produces a church where members invite others to join them, growth in numbers is not likely to occur.

One church surveyed its own members to determine what first brought them to that congregation. When they discovered that 90 percent responded to a personal invitation from a friend, neighbor, family member or coworker, church leaders decided to build opportunities to invite others into the structure of the church. Now at the beginning of each sermon series members are

provided "e-vites" to send out and flyers about the sermon series they can use to invite guests.

During each special holiday worship experience, similar support is provided and members are encouraged to bring others with them. And the program is working.

### Growing churches

Recently various news media seem to have emphasized challenges facing churches. But the negative tone of such articles should not obscure that some churches are growing in every part of the United States. And congregations whose members are heavily involved in inviting new people have a definite growth advantage.

Like the apostle Paul, we are "not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Romans 1:16). And neither should we be ashamed of our church. It is time to do something as basic as to invite a friend, neighbor or family member to join us at church this Sunday morning.





"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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# SACRIFICE

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## Support growing for American pastor held on 'trumped-up' charges in Iran

**T**he U.S. government and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) have issued calls for the release of an American pastor who may face the gallows for spreading the gospel in Iran.

Saeed Abedini, an Iranian-born pastor who is a naturalized U.S. citizen, faces charges of undermining the Iranian government by planting house churches and of trying to turn the country's youth from Islam, according to media reports.

Abedini's supporters say he was in Iran last summer to finish building an orphanage when members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard hauled him away in a bus for prison, according to World Watch Monitor, a news service focusing on the persecuted church.

Abedini has suffered beatings while in prison and now faces trial before a Revolutionary Court judge, Abbas Pir-Abbassi, labeled a human rights violator by the European Union and infamous for his harsh sentencing — including executions — of students who protested Iran's 2009 elections.

The U.S. State Department has yet to call for Abedini's release, although U.S. National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor urged Jan. 18 that the pastor be freed.

"We remain troubled by the case of U.S. citizen Saeed Abedini, who was arrested by Iranian officials more than three months ago on charges relating to his religious beliefs," Vietor said, according to Fox News. "We call upon Iranian authorities to release him immediately."

The USCIRF, a government advisory body, also called for Abedini's release and denounced Iran's "trumped-up" charges.

"The national security charges leveled

against Mr. Abedini are bogus and are a typical tactic by the Iranian government to masquerade the real reason for the charges: to suppress religious belief and activity of which the Iranian government does not approve," USCIRF chair Katrina Lantos Swett said in a news release, adding that Abedini cannot expect justice in court.

"Judge Pir-Abbassi is notorious for conducting swift trials and imposing lengthy prison terms, as well as the death penalty, without any semblance of due process," Swett said.

Iranian state media had reported Jan. 21 that Saeed Abedini would be freed on bail, a report that Saeed's wife, Naghmeh Abedini, denounced as a lie, according to Fox News.

"This has been a repeated promise by the Iranian regime since Saeed was first thrown in prison on Sept. 26, 2012," she told Fox. "We have presented bail. After the judge told Saeed's lawyer that bail was back on the table, the family in Tehran ran around in circles today to make sure Saeed was let out on bail. But again the bail officer rejected bail."

CNN reported that a trial of Saeed Abedini began Jan. 21. The pastor gave the judge a written statement and answered questions by prosecutors and his defense attorney.

The trial included a hearing — from which Saeed Abedini and his lawyer were barred

— in which a lay church leader was called to testify about his connection to Saeed Abedini, according to a blog post by Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ). Questions ranged from whether Saeed Abedini encouraged conversion to Christianity and how he financed his trips to establish an orphanage in Iran.

According to World Watch Monitor, Saeed Abedini converted from Islam to Christianity in 2000 and helped start house churches in Iran. He had been arrested multiple times by authorities, but Tiffany Barrans, ACLJ's international legal director, told World Watch Monitor that in 2009 the pastor made a deal with Iran's intelligence police.

### Driving out Christianity

That deal allowed him to come back to Iran to build an orphanage in exchange for staying out of house church work, an agreement his supporters say he kept. But before his latest trip to Iran, the religiously controlled Revolutionary Guard took jurisdiction over Iran's Christian community from the intelligence police, Barrans said, coinciding with a more aggressive campaign to drive Christianity out of Iran.

The ACLJ is taking a petition to President Obama, Congress and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urging all available diplomatic and legislative means to be used in securing Saeed Abedini's release. The petition is online at <http://aclj.org/iran/save-american-pastor-iranian-abuse-imprisonment>. (BP)



ABEDINI

**"After the judge told Saeed's lawyer that bail was back on the table, the family in Tehran ran around in circles today to make sure Saeed was let out on bail. But again the bail officer rejected bail."**

## The flu & you



**I**t's not too late to protect yourself and your family from the flu. Baptist Health System encourages everyone to follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Alabama Department of Public Health, which include:

• **Get a flu shot.** It's not too late; the

season runs through early April. Everyone over 6 months of age should get the flu vaccine. You are protected approximately two weeks after you receive the flu vaccine.

• **Help prevent the spread of flu by:**

— washing your hands frequently with soap and water

— covering your cough; sneezing into a tissue

— staying home if you are sick  
— avoiding touching your nose, mouth and eyes

For more information, visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu) or [adph.org/influenza](http://adph.org/influenza).

Source: Baptist Health System ([www.bhsala.com](http://www.bhsala.com))

# SALT

## Strategic Answers

### Apologetics conference trains believers for 'gracious' debate on range of topics

**G**ary Habermas was set to debate a well-known religious skeptic. As they worked to decide on the debate topic, the skeptic told Habermas, "Whatever we do, we're not doing the resurrection."

If the resurrection were a myth, Habermas said, wouldn't skeptics want to debate it? If something that incredible were really a myth, wouldn't it be easy to explode it?

"The argument for the resurrection has moved so much in the last few decades," said Habermas, a Christian apologist who specializes in research on the resurrection of Christ. "We can trace the eyewitness accounts to a year or two after the cross. That is incredible — we have almost nothing like it in ancient history."

Even if you take only the facts the critics themselves accept, you have an incredible and compelling argument, Habermas told those present at the SALT (Strategic Answers to Life's Thoughts) apologetics conference Jan. 19.

"One critic says in his book that, based on

the evidence, 'I am sure that the risen Jesus appeared to His followers after the resurrection,'" he said. "That tells us how the criticism has moved based on this kind of evidence."

And what would you want to be at the center of your faith more than something that is well evidenced, Habermas asked.

"Folks, we have the most fantastic data. We have the most fantastic foundation. Critics have to go to extremes to build cases," he said. "We have the best message in the world. You can be excited about life now and the best news is still to come. Can you beat that message?"

#### Event 'success,' videos online

Learning how to talk about the message of Christ was the goal of the SALT apologetics conference, sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), Tactical Faith and *The Alabama Baptist* at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Jan. 19–20.

More than 350 people came to the Saturday session to hear seven presentations on

### 'Come take on the pro-lifer'

Jay Watts once stood on a college campus with a sign over his head that said, "Come take on the pro-lifer."

And boy, did they.

"I stood in the middle of a lot of people shouting at me, 'Who do you think you are? How dare you tell people what they can do?' But within minutes, they were listening and talking and we were having a conversation," said Watts, a speaker and writer for Life Training Institute, a pro-life organization.

Why? Because Watts wouldn't shout back.

"Nasty is out there, and you have to be prepared to meet it. It tells you you're not allowed to talk, to 'grow up, this is the modern world,'" he said.

It's not an argument — it's an attempt to intimidate, Watts said.

"To respond to intimidation, we have to have our facts straight ... prepare for that nastiness and return gracious argument. There seems to be a universal admiration for people who can keep their cool and answer calmly."

You may not be able to change the mind of the person shouting in your face, but

you never know who is listening to the exchange, he said.

When a pro-life person is engaging in a conversation with someone pro-choice, the part to focus on is whether or not the unborn is a human.

"I often use the 'try it on the toddler' method," Watts said. "For instance, if there were a toddler that was the fifth of five children, she's a tremendous financial burden on the family and both parents have to work as a result to make ends meet. Would we say it was OK to kill that child?"

Of course not, he said. And so the question is, "What is the unborn?"

If it is a human, Watts said, then it shouldn't be OK to kill that child for financial reasons either.

"Before they (pro-choice people) get to arguing the issue of abortion, they are already assuming that they can do things to the unborn that they can't do to other humans," he said. "We have to show them that they can't assume that."

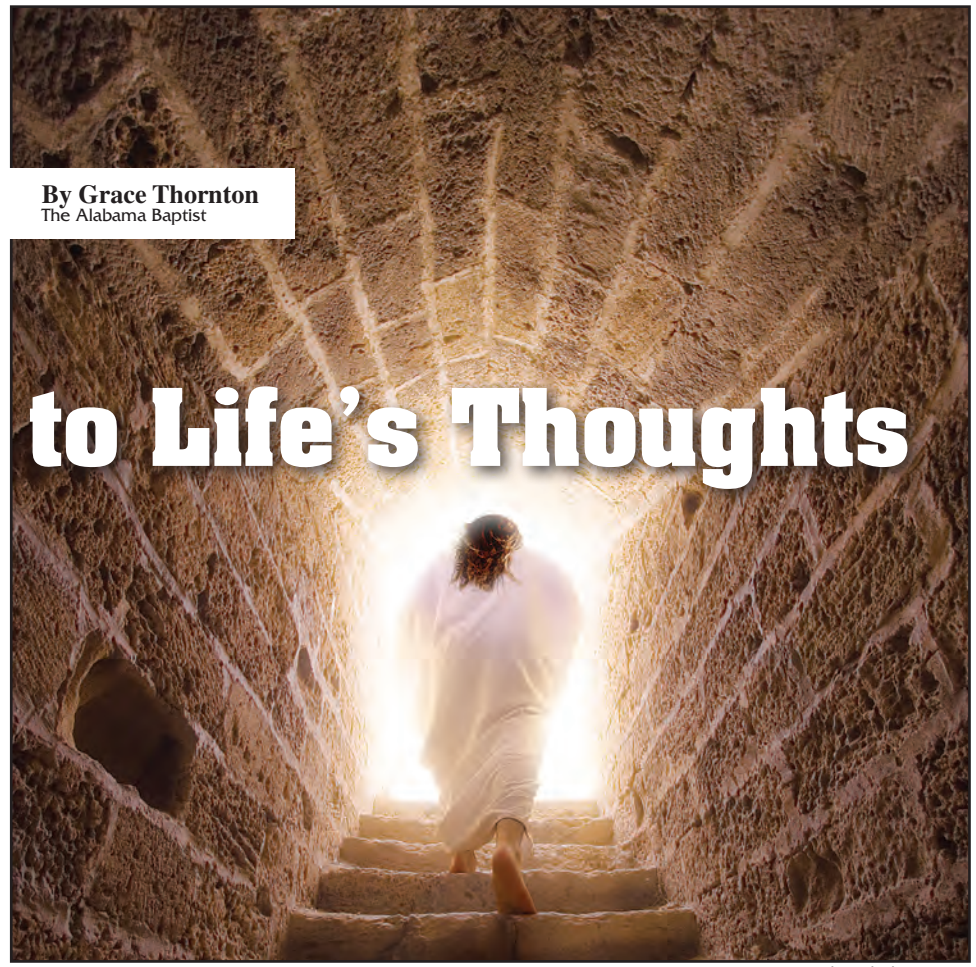
For more information, visit [www.pro-lifetraining.com](http://www.pro-lifetraining.com). 📖



WATTS

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

## to Life's Thoughts



istockphoto.com

topics from science to objective beauty to abortion (see stories, pages 4–5). About 250 more were watching the live stream online. A youth track went on simultaneously, and the conference wrapped with a talk on the Quran during the Sunday evening service at First, Montgomery.

"The event exceeded everyone's expectations," said Matt Burford of Tactical Faith, a group that aims to connect local churches in Alabama with quality apologetics training. "Our mission ... is to help 'start the conversation' in terms of apologetics. Listening to the dialogue in, around and after the conference I believe we achieved our goal."

The event was simple and powerful, he said.

Sammy Gilbreath, SBOM director of evangelism, said it met a need for a lot of people.

"We've heard glowing comments from laymen, pastors and church staff, and after

what we've heard, I believe we will have to add this to our conference schedule (for the future)," he said.

The conference is "so different" from the SBOM's annual evangelism conference, he said. "Where that conference is inspirational, this one provides very specific training on how to share your faith with atheists, agnostics, Muslims and others who may never [enter] a Baptist church. It teaches folks how to defend their faith in a loving, Christian way."

And every speaker on the program, which was put together by Tactical Faith, "hit a home run," Gilbreath said. "It was a huge suc-



HABERMAS

cess."

For more resources about the resurrection debate, visit [www.garyhabermas.com](http://www.garyhabermas.com). For more information about Tactical Faith or to watch videos from the conference, visit [www.tacticalfaith.com](http://www.tacticalfaith.com). 📖

### Objective standard of beauty shows existence of 'unchanging' God

Frank Zappa made his life out of making things ugly.

"His music was intentionally ugly," Doug Powell said.

"He was an atheist and his music portrayed that worldview. He hated Christianity, but he also went after objective beauty."

And Zappa found that the more he tried to make things ugly, the more musicians struggled to play his music, to break away from the innate sense of wanting to make it beautiful, Powell said.

"What has to happen to strive for intentional ugliness? You have to know there is an objective standard of beauty (that you're going against)," he said. "And for there to be an objective standard of beauty, there has to be a God."

Powell, a speaker and writer on apologetics topics, said humans are born with "a natural intuition of beauty" and know that

"the presence of beauty is outside ourselves."

And because it is outside ourselves, it has a definition that can be agreed on, even if something is not a particular person's "taste," he said.

"If beauty were in the eye of the beholder, beauty would be a meaningless word."

How does objective beauty show that God exists?

"It is unchanging, infinite, transcendent and personal, just like God," Powell said.

For more information, visit [www.selflessdefense.com](http://www.selflessdefense.com). 📖



POWELL

## Get over insults, get on to 'intelligent' talk, Koukl says

**Y**ou're intolerant." Sometimes that one sentence is enough to get Christians to balk at sharing the gospel, said Greg Koukl, founder and president of Stand to Reason, an organization that trains Christians to think about their faith and give a gracious defense.

"'You're intolerant' is the adult equivalent of a kindergarten saying, 'You're mean,' and it often stops Christians in their tracks before they even get started," Koukl said to those present at the SALT apologetics conference Jan. 19. "It's meant to humiliate a Christian, but it strikes me as so silly that I'm surprised people are impressed with it."

If people want to think that, it's OK, Koukl said. Not that Christians want to actually act that way, but graciously leave the insult there and "get on to an intelligent adult conversation about spiritual matters," he said.

And talk with them about spirituality in the same way humans talk about other areas of life, Koukl said.



Photo by Grace Thornton  
Greg Koukl tells Christians to guide people to things that 'make sense.'

"We think about things and decide if the ideas themselves make sense," he said. "We also observe the world around us and decide if those ideas fit with the world."

For instance, when someone told Koukl once that he believed life had no meaning or purpose, Koukl asked him if he had ever tried to talk someone out of suicide.

The person said he had, and Koukl asked why. "The man said, 'So they wouldn't waste their life,' and I asked, 'How could he waste something that had no meaning?'"

Our ideas should add up with what we experience in the world, Koukl said.

"I'm not an atheist because there are so many things that are counterintuitive that I would have to affirm — that life came from no life, that something came from nothing, that morality poofed out of thin air," he said.

Guide people to see the fit between the Christian worldview and the way the world is, Koukl said.

For more information, visit [www.str.org](http://www.str.org). ☞

## Is the New Testament reliable?

**W**hat would you say to someone who told you the New Testament isn't reliable?

What if he told you there were more variations in the existing New Testament manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament?

What if he was right?

According to Robert Stewart, associate professor of philosophy and theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, believers need to "separate the facts from the interpretation of the facts."

People often tout that there are 138,000 words in the New Testament and somewhere around 300,000 to 400,000 variations between manuscripts. When you say it that way, it sounds like a huge problem, Stewart said.

But talking about variants that way is "somewhat deceptive," he said. There are around 100 million words in the New Testament when the total number of words from all the manuscripts is counted in the same way that the variations are counted.

"The result when counting apples to apples is that less than 1 percent of the text of the New Testament is problematic in any way," Stewart said. "Do you see how the way you present the data influences people?"

Why are there so many manuscripts of

the New Testament with variants anyway?

"Because Christians were copying these books like mad," he said. "They were under persecution, and they wanted as many copies as possible because they (the manuscripts) were important."

As a result, errors were made by the scribes — spelling and nonsense errors, mistakes due to poor eyesight, short-term memory errors and errors in judgment.

It wasn't because someone was trying to edit the manuscripts for content, Stewart said.

"Nobody controlled the process," he said, noting that anybody and everybody were copying the texts. "This means there were errors, but it also means that nobody had the control to take out unpopular doctrines that Jesus taught from the texts."

Christians can have a high degree of confidence in the Greek text of the New Testament as we have it today, Stewart said. The presence of variants in the texts shouldn't affect that, he said.

And the errors made by scribes don't affect the inerrancy of Scripture either, Stewart said.

"Inerrancy refers to the text as originally given (from God)," he said. "Inspiration relates only to the biblical authors, not to the thousands of scribes who copied their work." ☞



STEWART

## Know 'real story' before buying into 'faith-wrecking' myths

**I**f you heard the story of Horus, would it wreck your faith in Jesus Christ?

If you were told that Horus was born Dec. 25 of a virgin, heralded by a star in the east, adorned by three kings, baptized at 30, performed miracles, was crucified and resurrected three days later — all 3,000 years before Christ?

Or what about Dionysus, a miracle worker said to be born of a virgin Dec. 25 and called "King of Kings" — 500 years before Christ?

Or Mithras? Or Osiris? Both of them have similarities in the stories told about them. Does that change the way you look at Jesus?

"At some point, you're likely going to come across the argument that maybe Jesus' story was just ripped off from a lot of pagan myths," said Mary Jo Sharp, a former atheist who holds a master's degree in Christian apologetics and teaches at Houston Baptist University. "It's very popular," she said, noting that people propagated these stories on "The View" and on BBC, among other places.

Sharp said she's talked with people who watched "Zeitgeist: The Movie," a film that aims to undercut religion with pagan myth stories, and said, "It really blew up my faith."

How should we react to the stories themselves and to the people who tell them? First get the whole story, Sharp said. "Read the stories online and see the difference," she said, noting some were available at <http://classics.mit.edu> or by Googling "Egyptian Book of the Dead."

One of the noticeable differences, she said, is that the myths never seek to establish historical details or a specific time and date. But Luke, for example, writes in his Gospel

that he wants to record a reliable history with eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus Christ.

Second take the parallels head to head, Sharp said. As she spoke to those gathered at SALT on Jan. 19, she compared each point of each myth to the story of Jesus.

For instance, with the so-called virgin birth similarity, the "virgin birth" of Horus was written to be the result of a god and goddess having intercourse in his mother's womb.

Mithras' "virgin birth" allegedly consisted of him being born out of a rock on the banks of a river.

"These look a lot different from Jesus' story, who was born as a baby to a human female who never had sexual intercourse," Sharp said.

As for the crucifixion, Horus actually was said to have sacrificed an eye instead of dying, and Osiris was said to have been shut in a coffin by his brother, Sharp said.

"None of these were like the human Jesus enduring a Roman crucifixion on a cross," she said.

And none were resurrected as Jesus was — some were allegedly pieced back together or revived in the land of the dead, Sharp said.

Believers also should consider how the stories are vastly different in purpose, Sharp said. "They (at the time of the pagan myths) often thought the solution to human problems was something they could do."

Christians realize that the solution for the human problem is something — Someone — found outside of ourselves, she said.

"If the resurrection didn't happen ... if it's not true, then there is no forgiveness. We are stuck in our sin," Sharp said. Jesus' story, she said, is the only one that offers hope.

For more information, visit [maryjosharp.com](http://maryjosharp.com). ☞



SHARP

## Do the Bible, science contradict each other? Howard says no

**D**o the Bible and science contradict each other? When biblical writers describe the earth as being stationary or flat, does that mean the rest of the Bible is false and outdated?

The answer to both questions is no, said Jeremy Howard, an author, editor, speaker and Christian apologist. "The goal in reading the Bible is reading it well," he said. "And we have to know that the Bible and a science textbook have two different goals, and those goals aren't to make the same kind of claims about science."

For instance, when the author of Psalm 104:5 wrote, "He (God) set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved," he wasn't making a scientific statement about the world, Howard said.

The writer was trying to make a statement about the power of the Creator within the view the ancients had of the world, he explained.

If God had tried to communicate with the people of Israel in terms of space science or other complexities not yet discovered, they wouldn't have understood, so the language of the Bible is the language they could comprehend and write down, he explained.

So when Scripture refers to the floodgates of heaven, it doesn't mean actual floodgates. It also doesn't mean there's an actual heaven-

ly sea that can be scientifically proven, Howard said. "Does this mean there is a reason to claim we have an errant Bible? No, because it did not seek to outpace ancient concepts and teach true science."

The Bible had a different purpose altogether, he said. God "was not intending to make a scientifically accurate statement. His aim was not to teach Hebrews about space but to teach them that He made everything they saw when they looked up."

Understanding the original audience is vital to understanding how science and the Bible relate, Howard said. Christians "must take great care to read the ancient Scriptures responsibly and in accord with their historical contexts," he said.

"Beware of mistaking biblical literalism for biblical authority or fidelity to God's Word," he said. "The Bible is the authority for matters it intended to address."

And beware of thinking about the Bible and science in such a way that it creates a "radical divide" between what is known to be true in nature and what you insist is true.

"Science must remain tethered to the biblical worldview but not captive to a rigid biblical literalism," Howard said.

For more information, visit [www.jeremyroyalhoward.com](http://www.jeremyroyalhoward.com). ☞



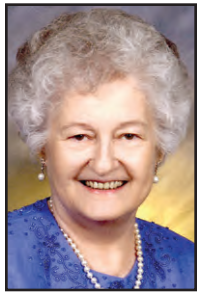
HOWARD

# Across Alabama's Associations

## BETHLEHEM/PINE BARREN

► **Bobbie Jean Benton Best** died Jan. 20. She was 79.

Best was the wife of James Richard Best, retired director of



**BEST**

missions for Bethlehem and Pine Barren Baptist associations and most recently associate pastor of Thomasville Church. She is survived by her husband; three children; six grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

## DALE

► **Ariton Church** will hold a pork plate sale Feb. 9 to benefit its benevolence fund, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Plates will be pre-sold but also can be purchased on the day. The church also will hold a Daddy-Daughter Dinner for Valentine's Day on Feb. 16, 4–6 p.m., with music and a meal. Speakers will be daddy-daughter pair David and Maggie Walsh. David Walsh is pastor. ► **Daleville Church** will hold revival with Brian Fossett, Feb. 10–13. The church also will hold a Celebrate God's Love Banquet on Feb. 17, 5 p.m. Judson Waldrop is pastor. ► **Ridgecrest**

**Church, Ozark**, will hold revival Feb. 10–12. The revival will be a family-focused event and will kick off with a Miracle of Marriage workshop for couples led by Edwin and Joan Jenkins. Edwin Jenkins will preach Sunday and Monday. Bo Weed will preach Tuesday and Wednesday. The church also is adding a contemporary worship opportunity for a 10-week trial basis through March 24. New worship times will be 8:30 a.m. for contemporary worship, 9:45 a.m. Sunday School and 11 a.m. traditional worship. Jim Hill is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Northpark Church, Trussville**, is sending a missions team to Reach the Nations in Atlanta, Feb. 1–2. Those participating in the experience will minister to people from other countries who live in Atlanta. Northpark's student ministry also is preparing for its annual Go Tour, which will be March 17–22 in Jacksonville, Fla. The church has a variety of other missions trips planned throughout the year. Ryan Christmas is minister to students. Bill Wilks is senior pastor.

## SARDIS

► **Mount Carmel Church, Coffee Springs**, will hold a 50th anniversary of ministry service

for Pastor James Preachers and his wife Feb. 17. An appreciation program will be at 2 p.m. followed by fellowship and greeting. For information call 334-898-7098.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Hilltop Church, Northport**, will hold a Valentine concert and dinner Feb. 10. The service begins at 10:30 a.m. and will feature guest singers Debra Terry and Jaidyn's Call. Dinner will be at noon and an hour of singing will follow from 1–2 p.m. For information call 205-242-1679. Bill Reeves is pastor.

## WINSTON

► **Pleasant Hill Church #2, Double Springs**, will hold senior adult revival Feb. 18–20, 10:30 a.m. William McClelland will speak, and everyone is invited to attend. For information call 205-489-2175. Jeffrey Wiggins is pastor. ► **Lynn Church** will hold a men's conference Feb. 23. The meal will be at 4 p.m. and the conference will be at 6 p.m. Jeffrey Wiggins will speak and the Renfro Family will provide music. Tim Box is pastor.

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

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



## Thaxton Marion Whiddon

*Former Columbia Association moderator dies*

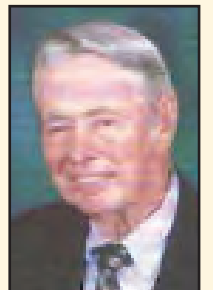
Thaxton Marion Whiddon served in ministry for more than 58 years. He passed away Sept. 26, 2012, at the age of 83.

Whiddon, born in Houston County, attended Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham.

He was ordained to preach at Selma Baptist Church, Dothan, in 1953.

Whiddon served as pastor of several Alabama churches including Camp Springs Baptist Church, Columbia; Balkum Baptist Church, Headland; Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds; Chalkhead Baptist Church, Ozark; and Taylor Baptist Church, Dothan, where he was serving at the time of his death. He also served as interim pastor at nine Alabama Baptist churches and as Columbia Baptist Association moderator.

Whiddon is preceded in death by his son, Kem Allen Whiddon, and survived by his wife, Bobbie; four children; eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



**WHIDDON**

## Edward Owen Heptinstall Sr.

*Alabama Baptist minister dies at 78*

After serving 31 years in ministry, Edward Owen Heptinstall Sr. passed away Dec. 22, 2012. He was 78.



**HEPTINSTALL**

Born in Anniston, Heptinstall received a bachelor of arts degree from the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, Fla., and Samford University in Birmingham.

Heptinstall served in the pastoral role at several Alabama churches including Eastside Baptist Church, Birmingham; First Baptist Church, Anniston; Stockdale Baptist Church, Munford; and Concord Baptist Church, Cullman, where he was serving at the time of his death. He also served as an associate pastor of East Side Baptist Church, Cullman, and Highland Park Baptist Church, Panama City, Fla.

Heptinstall is survived by his wife, Geraldine; two children; six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)

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# January Bible study



An in-depth look at Holy Week • Last in a series

## Jesus' resurrection, appearance transformed His followers

Jesus died about mid-afternoon on Good Friday (see Mark 15:34, 37). His body was wrapped in linen and transported to a rock-hewn tomb located in a garden (see Luke 23:53, John 19:41). There wasn't enough time before sunset (when the Sabbath began) to prepare Jesus' body for a proper burial, so the women who planned to do that had to postpone their work. As it turned out, they never got to do it.

### Saturday

Luke writes of those women, "On the Sabbath day they rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). But not all Jews rested on that Sabbath. Some of the Jewish leaders went to Pilate and persuaded him to send soldiers to seal the stone door at the mouth of the cave so that Jesus' disciples could not steal His body (see Matt. 27:62–66). It was an exercise in futility. Nothing they could have done would have kept Jesus in the tomb.

### Sunday

On Sunday morning God raised Jesus from the dead. We will consider three questions about the first Easter Sunday: What did the disciples see? Did the resurrection really happen? What does the resurrection mean?

What did the disciples see? The Gospels treat the resurrection of Jesus as a mystery. None of them says that anyone was present to see the resurrection. What the disciples saw was the effects of the resurrection — a living Jesus and an empty cave.

The church historian Hans von Campenhausen called these two sets of narratives the appearances tradition and the empty cave tradition. The New Testament epistles, which probably were written before the Gospels, record only the appearances tradition. The Gospels record both traditions.

The risen Jesus appeared only to His followers. Some critics have asked why He didn't appear to unbelievers, but the Gospels make it clear that when Jesus appeared to His followers they were not yet believers in His resurrection. They became believers only when they saw Him.

It isn't clear what the sequence of Jesus' appearances was. Luke records three appearances. He writes that "two men in dazzling clothes" told the women who came to prepare Jesus' body for burial that Jesus was alive, but he doesn't say that the women saw Jesus. The women told Peter who went to see for himself. On the road to Emmaus Jesus appeared to two disciples who finally recognized Him when they dined with Him. They went to Jerusalem and told the 11 and some others who then responded that Jesus had already appeared to Peter. While they were talking Jesus appeared to all of them at once and dined with them. They walked together over to Bethany where Jesus blessed them and then ascended to heaven (Luke 24).

Some of the ancient manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark

By Fisher Humphreys

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



do not record any appearances of Jesus, but others record that "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene" and then to two disciples who "were walking into the country." Finally He appeared to the 11, commissioned them to preach the good news, and was taken up into heaven (Mark 16).

Matthew records that Jesus appeared to the women as they were leaving the tomb and then to the disciples in Galilee (Matt. 28).

John records that Mary Magdalene went to the garden and saw that the stone had been moved from Jesus' tomb. She reported this to Peter and the beloved disciple, presumably John, and they ran to the tomb and found it empty. After they left, Jesus appeared to Mary, and she went and told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." That evening Jesus appeared to the disciples who were in a locked room hiding from the authorities. Thomas was not there, but he was present a week later when Jesus appeared to them again.

Later Jesus appeared to seven of them in Galilee and cooked breakfast for them. John concluded his Gospel by saying that Jesus did so many other things that if they were all written down "the world itself could not contain the books" (John 20).

The sequence of the various appearances may be unclear, but two things are quite clear. One is that Jesus appeared to numerous people on numerous occasions. Another is that Jesus' appearances were so real that everyone

**"Why do you seek the living  
among the dead?  
He is not here, but has risen."**

Luke 24:5b–6a

*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*

who saw Him came to believe that "The Lord has risen indeed!" (Luke 24:34).

This leads to our second question, one which comes naturally to people in our critical age: Did the resurrection really happen?

If you begin with the assumption that resurrection cannot happen, neither the Gospel narratives nor modern arguments for the historicity of the resurrection are likely to persuade you otherwise. The question to ask yourself is, why should I be making this assumption? If you begin to doubt your assumption and to accept that at least in principle God might raise the dead, then you will be ready to consider the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection.

That evidence is strong. For example, Jesus appeared to many people, not just one or two. He appeared often, not just once or twice. He appeared to groups, not just to individuals. The fact that the sequence of the appearances is unclear suggests that the Gospel writers did not put their heads together and collude on a single sequence. Rather, they had access to multiple witnesses, and they narrated their stories as they received them.

Then there is the effect of Jesus' appearances on the disciples. They were transformed. They had been disillusioned individuals, and they became an intentional faith community. Peter, who once had cravenly denied that he even knew Jesus, became a courageous preacher of the gospel of Jesus. How can these transformations be explained? The biblical explanation is that Jesus appeared to His disciples, they became convinced that He had been resurrected and it changed their lives.

And so we come to our third and final question: What is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection?

First the resurrection means that Jesus was completely vindicated. On Easter, God put a divine stamp of approval on everything Jesus had said and done.

Second the resurrection means God brought the old age to an end and inaugurated a new era in the relationship between God and human beings. In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter associated the close of the old age with Jesus' resurrection — the resurrection comes at the end of the world — and he associated the inauguration of the new era with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:17, 32–33).

Third the resurrection means that Jesus is alive. The church is not a community that remembers a dead founder. It is a community that shares in the life of a risen Lord.

Finally the resurrection means we know Jesus' identity. Paul probably was quoting an early Christian saying when he wrote that Jesus "was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). The first disciples learned from Jesus' resurrection who He is. The same is true of us. If we don't take Jesus' resurrection seriously, we don't understand Him. ☞

# Alabama legality debate continues over electronic bingo, liquor license

In a daylong hearing Jan. 23 in front of an Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board panel, lawyers for the Alabama attorney general and VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor debated the legality of electronic bingo, according to news reports.

The hearing to decide whether VictoryLand receives a liquor license for its casino floor yielded no result from the ABC Board panel, which is expected to make a decision by early February.

Following a two-year shutdown after a state crackdown on electronic bingo casinos, the VictoryLand casino floor reopened Dec. 18, 2012. Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange had said he was disappointed VictoryLand had “chosen the path of confrontation rather than accept our offer to prove that their operations are legal in court,” according to an al.com news report.

VictoryLand’s reopening was the result of a promise McGregor made after being acquitted by a jury in March 2012 of vote-buying charges, according to an al.com news report. VictoryLand attorney Joe Espy holds that the machines at VictoryLand are legal, according to news reports.

## History of violation

Strange asked the ABC Board in December to reject the liquor license application for VictoryLand “because the casino has a history of violating Alabama’s laws against illegal gambling,” according to an al.com news report.

The Jan. 23 hearing took place in a full room, and a separate overflow room for people to watch a video of the proceeding also was available, according to a report by the *Montgomery Advertiser*.

Espy said the casino had a license years before closing in 2010



**STRANGE** Photo courtesy of AG office

and there were never any issues, according to a report on the hearing by the *Montgomery Advertiser*.

“We appreciate the ABC Commission providing the attorney general’s office an opportunity to present evidence in support of our protest,” Strange said. “Alabama law does not allow a business to have a license to sell alcohol if that business is engaged in unlawful gambling activities. We believe our evidence clearly showed that VictoryLand is operating several hundred illegal slot machines and their alcohol license application should be denied. We are not going to simply look the other way and let them have a bar to go along with their slot machines.”

Meanwhile, initiatives against electronic bingo continue in other areas of the state.

Strange recently recognized District Attorney Bill Adair for his office’s partnership in “a strong initiative to shut down so-called ‘electronic bingo’ casinos in Walker County,” according to a news release from Strange’s office.

Agents of the attorney general’s office and the district attorney’s office shut down illegal gambling

operations involving 15 machines at Arrowhead Golf Course on Holly Grove Road and 20 machines at a private building on Valley Loop Road on Jan. 10. The Arrowhead Golf Course also was the subject of a similar law enforcement operation in September 2012.

“These actions are the culmination of a joint investigation by the attorney general’s office and the Walker County district attorney’s office, with assistance provided by the Walker County sheriff’s office,” Strange said in the release. “From my first day in office, I have acted to ensure that illegal gambling laws are enforced consistently across the state. These cooperative law enforcement efforts in Walker County demonstrate our commitment to do so effectively.”

Strange added that until the Alabama Legislature acts “to create an effective deterrent for large scale illegal gambling, individuals will continue to engage in illegal gambling activity and openly defy the law. These individuals stand to make thousands of dollars in illegal gambling profits while risking only a slap-on-the-wrist misdemeanor charge. Law enforcement will continue to be forced to expend valuable resources to deal with the growing problem. The Legislature must change that weakness in our law and create a badly needed deterrent for large scale illegal gambling by increasing the penalty for operating an illegal slot machine casino to a felony.”

Last year House Bill 414, filed by Rep. Allen Farley, R-McCalla, would have made, among other things, the possession of 10 slot machines or gambling devices and the promotion of and conspiracy to promote illegal gambling a felony. The bill never came to the House floor for consideration. (TAB)

# SBOM adds two to staff, promotes another

Two new state missionaries have joined the staff of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), and another staffer is moving into a director role.

Rick Barnhart begins his role as director of the SBOM’s office of associational missions and church planting Feb. 1. He has been serving as director-elect since Aug. 1 under Gary Swafford, who retired Jan. 31 (see story, this page).

Barnhart previously served as director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association. He has served in various ministry roles in Alabama and Florida.

Also serving in Barnhart’s office



**BARNHART**



**DUKE**



**WAKEFIELD**

will be new associate Lamar Duke. Duke will focus on partnering with Alabama Baptist churches, associations and catalytic missionaries to start 32 new churches each year.

He most recently served as director of missions for the Baptist Convention of New York and previously served as pastor of a number of churches across Alabama,

Georgia, Louisiana and New Jersey.

Also joining the SBOM staff is new associate Mark Wakefield. Wakefield will specialize in chaplaincy and disaster relief, a ministry emphasis formerly located in the office of associational missions and church planting that has now been moved to the office of global missions.

Wakefield has served as a Southern Baptist disaster relief chaplain since 2005 and in various other church and chaplaincy roles in Alabama.

Duke and Wakefield were both approved at the Jan. 17 SBOM executive committee meeting. (TAB)

## Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

### State Board of Missions’ Gary Swafford retires

A missionary on all levels of Baptist life, Gary Swafford retired Jan. 31.

Swafford most recently served as director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Swafford, a Huntsville native, began his missionary service in Pennsylvania with the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) in 1967 where he started a new church.

He then traveled overseas, serving from 1969–1991 in Malawi with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board). Swafford planted 11 churches and trained national leaders during his time in the African nation. While there, he also served as a church development consultant, media director, publications supervisor, building designer/consultant and administrator of the Baptist Mission.

When Swafford and his wife, Carolyn, moved to Alabama, he served as director of missions for Butler Baptist Association (1992–1995) before joining the SBOM staff in 1995. He was elected director of the office of associational missions and church planting in 2005.

“During his tenure at the SBOM, Gary has given guidance to associational missions coordination, building services consultation and church planting efforts,” said Rick Lance, executive director of the SBOM. “His commitment is one marked by a ‘beyond the call of duty’ type sacrifice. In essence, Gary ... has been a pastor to the DOMs in our state. They see him in that light and they appreciate his pastoral care and concern for them. He has made a world of difference in their lives.”

Swafford noted how valuable the partnership with the associational missionaries was and how they have been his “family in ministry.” He also noted working with Lance, the SBOM executive office and leaders from across the state has been extremely rewarding, adding that he views the opportunity for his family to have continued their missionary calling in the family of Alabama Baptists “the icing on the cake.”

And while he may be retiring from full-time ministry, he said he and his wife intend to move to Huntsville sometime within the year, where they will remain involved in ministry opportunities. “I have always said I will retire ‘to,’ not ‘from,’” he said.

The Swaffords are members of First Baptist Church, Montgomery. They have four daughters and eight grandchildren.

(Julie Payne)

### WMU’s Roberson named ‘Emerging Leader’

Jean Roberson, ministry consultant and Adult Resource team leader for national Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU), was recognized by the Missouri Baptist Foundation (MBF) as the first recipient of the Emerging Leader Award.

The award recognizes a leader who “represents the next generation of young adults practicing whole-life stewardship in Christian ministry,” according to the MBF’s website.

Chris Calmer, president and treasurer of the MBF, presented the award to Roberson Dec. 13. As part of the presentation, Calmer read part of a letter from Greg Morrow, Roberson’s youth pastor.

“Having known you since you were in second grade ... and staying connected during the years since ... if the award was simply ‘leader,’ you would fit that criteria as well because this you have been your entire life,” Morrow wrote.

Born in Jefferson City, Mo., Roberson is the daughter of Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, and the late Eleanor Terry. She earned a bachelor’s degree from William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., and a master’s degree in social work from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. She is a licensed certified social worker in the state of Alabama and an active member of Riverchase Baptist Church, Birmingham.

At WMU, she directs the development of missions resources for adults and church leadership and serves as director of Christian Women’s Job Corps/Christian Men’s Job Corps. (WMU)



**ROBERSON**

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Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

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**MANY MINISTRIES:**  
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*news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 □ www.alsbom.org*

# Praying Across Alabama

Long ago, Andrew Murray wrote succinctly about the need for prayer as a priority in our lives as leaders: "... if the leaders of the church could see that in spiritual work everything depends upon prayer and that God Himself helps those who wait on Him, it could be a day of hope for our church."

Those poignant words, written more than a century ago, ring more true today than ever before. In our time of moral erosion, economic crisis and spiritual lethargy,

we must rediscover the timeless God-given power through prayer. Praying Across Alabama is an effort to saturate our state with a prayer vigil in each county.

I will be joining various other state missionaries in giving leadership in this prayer endeavor.

I will be joining various other state missionaries in giving leadership in this prayer endeavor. We are partnering with local associations and, in most places, we are meeting on the steps of the county courthouses across our state. If weather is inclement, then we will have an alternative service at a local church.

Praying Across Alabama is all about calling God's people to passionate, persistent and

personal prayer. We need to pray for ourselves, not selfishly but with a sense of repentance.

By Rick Lance  
State Missionary  
Executive Director



We need to pray for servants: those who are elected or appointed to leadership positions in public life and in our churches.

Furthermore, we must pray for souls! Evangelistic praying has been lost in the high weeds of our changing culture, both in society itself and regrettably in our churches. If we do not commit our

energies to praying for a spiritual awakening, then we are actually sinning against God Himself.

Praying Across Alabama is one of the most significant efforts to which we could

dedicate ourselves as Alabama Baptists. It is designed to help us focus on the need to do what Andrew Murray desired in his day, that is to devote ourselves to "Living a Prayerful Life." May we rededicate our lives to this godly ambition!

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NKJV)*



# Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program

BY RICK MARSHALL

My parents taught me the importance of sharing in what God was doing from the time I got my first allowance. As I recall it was the whole amount of 50 cents a week which may appear incredibly small in this economy. I learned that a tithe, a nickel, went every week to the Lord's work through my church. Obviously, as a child, I had no clue all about how budgets work or the relationship of my church to the Cooperative Program. But that early training and example prepared me for seeing later how I was a part of all my church was doing locally and globally.



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



Fortunately I grew up in a church where missions and missionaries were frequently talked about and hosted. It was somewhere in those early years I heard about how all our churches together sent people to do missions where we could not go individually. I learned that not only was I to tithe my allowance and income from small jobs as a student but that my church was sending part of that on to the work of our convention. That was my first impression of the Cooperative Program. Every person could have a part in what we were doing as Southern Baptists. It was both exciting and fulfilling.

However, it was in college days and beyond that the real impact dawned on me. Finding myself deeply involved in campus ministry, Baptist Student Union in those days, we were raising money and appointing summer missionaries to work with ministries in our country and around the world which found much of their funding from the Cooperative Program. My friends were going to places like Vietnam, Bangladesh and Nigeria as well as inner city New York and San Francisco to work with missionaries who were there because of the Cooperative Program.

As God called me to ministry while in college, I made plans to attend seminary. As it turned out over the next several years I had the privilege of receiving degrees from two different Southern Baptist seminaries. There I received the best in theological education and preparation for ministry from the finest of professors. Much of the cost of that education came through Cooperative Program gifts.

Having served now four churches in our state as a pastor, I

have seen in a different light the value of this great program. As Alabama Baptists, we are more than 3,200

churches from every corner of the state as well as every style and size. No two are alike.

Yet we have a channel, a means of doing something together we could never do separately. Through the Cooperative Program, no dollar from the largest church is more important than the one from the smallest. No ministry in Alabama or beyond appeals for funding based on emotion. Rather, this marvelous mechanism in Baptist life allows us to fund the missions ministries of our state as well as beyond our boundaries through the Southern Baptist Convention.

It's a long way now from that first nickel put in my weekly envelope as an elementary school child to serving as a pastor for more than half my life. But the Cooperative Program has been working for me and our churches the whole time. It has given me a sense of being part of a team with a Kingdom purpose. It became a two-way bridge over which I could send offerings through my church and from which I could learn about what God was doing here and around the world. I have seen students educated and ministers trained as well as missionaries appointed knowing that our gifts helped them cross those bridges. The Cooperative Program was also a yardstick by which I could measure my church's commitment to missions. It was also like a chain that linked my life and those in the churches where I have served to those around the world. Chains not only connect but are designed to complete a task in which each link has a part.

Upon reflection, I am convinced Southern Baptists have yet to find any means or method that allows more people to share more directly with more spiritual needs than the Cooperative Program. It reflects our historic purpose as a mission denomination; it unites our churches large or small; it expands our personal witness as messengers of the Gospel in ways we could never have done alone. It is my prayer that the Cooperative Program will continue to be seen as the most effective means of doing missions together as Southern Baptists.

*Rick Marshall is senior pastor, Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery.*




Sharing Christ in Crisis

## Save the Date!

# April 5-6, 2013

## State Disaster Relief Training

Shocco Springs

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Your Connection to Disaster Relief

"Involving Southern Baptists in Disaster Relief" (ISBIDR) is a prerequisite class for all specialized Disaster Relief training. ISBIDR class will begin at 1 p.m. Friday.

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2. Reservations for full lodging and meals OR commuters must also be completed. Call Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105. (Cost for the full conference is paid directly to Shocco Springs.)

For additional information, please contact Ministry Assistant Mondene Coker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 273, or (334) 613-2273, [mcoker@alsbom.org](mailto:mcoker@alsbom.org).

**Mark your church calendar:** Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Offering  
Sunday, April 21

Response Assured



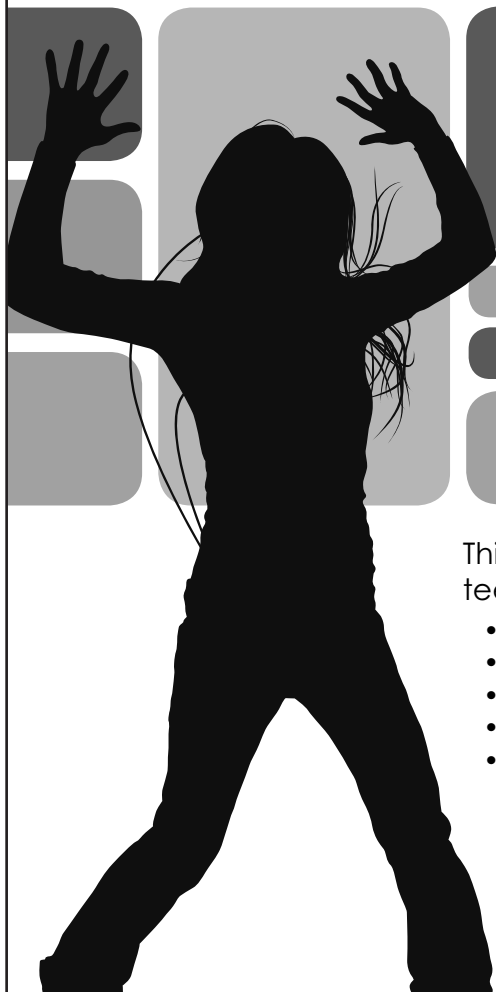
Disaster Relief training is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

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**For more information, visit [www.alabamawmu.org/students](http://www.alabamawmu.org/students), call 800.264.1225 ext. 223 or e-mail Erin Bishop at [ebishop@alsbom.org](mailto:ebishop@alsbom.org).**

This event is made possible by gifts given through the Kathleen Mallory Mission Offering and the Cooperative Program.

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# 2013 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

Monday and Tuesday,  
**February 25-26**  
 First Baptist Church, Trussville  
*Conference begins Monday at 6 p.m.*

**Online Information:** [www.alsbom.org/sec](http://www.alsbom.org/sec)

**Speakers:**



Chuck Kelley



Robert Smith



Herb Reavis



Ronnie Floyd



Jonathan Falwell



William Rice



Dan Lanier



Fred Luter

**Worship Leaders:**



Larnelle Harris



Charles Billingsley



Bob Smith

**Monday Afternoon**

4:30 Dinner with Chuck Kelley  
*(Building E, Gymnasium - Registration Required)*

**Monday Evening: Rally**

6:00	Choir	Gardendale First Baptist Church
6:10	Welcome	Sammy Gilbreath
6:15	Prayer	Mike McLemore
6:25	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
6:30	Special Music	Charles Billingsley
6:40	SPEAKER	Herb Reavis
7:20	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
7:25	Video - Praying Across Alabama	
7:35	Special Music	Charles Billingsley and Gardendale FBC Choir
7:50	SPEAKER	Chuck Kelley
8:30	Prayer	Sammy Gilbreath

**Tuesday Morning**

9:00	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
9:05	Welcome	Sammy Gilbreath
9:10	Prayer	
9:18	Special Music	Charles Billingsley
9:23	SPEAKER	Dan Lanier
10:00	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
10:10	Special Music	Charles Billingsley
10:15	SPEAKER	Ronnie Floyd
10:50	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
11:00	Special Music	Charles Billingsley
11:10	SPEAKER	Jonathan Falwell
11:50	Prayer	Phil Winningham
12:00	<b>Ministers' Wives Luncheon</b>	<b>Building D, High School Ministry (Registration Required)</b>

**Tuesday Afternoon**

1:55	Special Music	Bob Smith
2:00	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
2:05	Youth Evangelism	
	Conference promo	Mike Nuss

**FOCUS on One Mission**



**Dinner with Chuck Kelley: 4:30 p.m. Monday, February 25, at FBC Trussville; \$5 per person, pre-registration required.**

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, will give an address on the state of the Southern Baptist Convention. You may register online at:

**[www.alsbom.org/dinnerwithchuckkelley](http://www.alsbom.org/dinnerwithchuckkelley)**

*(Also speaking during the Monday evening rally of the State Evangelism Conference.)*

For other information, please contact Amy Nelson at **1-800-264-1225**, ext. **258**, or **(334) 613-2258**, [anelson@alsbom.org](mailto:anelson@alsbom.org)

2:10	Prayer	Sammy Gilbreath
2:15	Special Music	Bob Smith
2:25	SPEAKER	Robert Smith
3:05	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
3:15	Special Music	Bob Smith
3:20	SPEAKER	William Rice
4:00	Prayer	Billy Harris

**Tuesday Evening: Rally**

*Rick Lance, Presiding*

6:30	Choir	First Baptist Church, Trussville
6:40	Welcome	Rick Lance
6:45	Prayer	Buddy Champion
6:50	Praise & Worship	Tim Head
6:55	Mini Concert	Larnelle Harris
7:35	Special Music	Larnelle Harris and FBC Trussville Choir
7:45	SPEAKER	Fred Luter
8:45	Prayer	Rick Lance

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HAMPTON INN, 1940 Edwards Lake Rd., Birmingham, **(205) 655-9777**  
 HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS, 5911 Valley Rd., Trussville, **(205) 655-2700**  
 HILTON GARDEN INN, 3230 Edwards Lake Pkwy., Birmingham, **(205) 655-5222**

*For more information about the State Evangelism Conference please contact Ministry Assistant Amy Nelson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, (334) 613-2258, [anelson@alsbom.org](mailto:anelson@alsbom.org).*

You are cordially invited to the annual  
**Ministers' Wives Luncheon**  
 at the State Evangelism Conference

February 26, 2013  
 Noon  
 First Baptist Church,  
 Trussville

*with guest speaker*  
**Dr. Rhonda Kelley,**  
 author, professor and wife of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Dr. Chuck Kelley

This event is free, but reservations are required. Space is limited. Register now at [www.alabamawmu.org](http://www.alabamawmu.org) or 800.264.1225, ext. 223.

This event is open to ministers' wives only.  
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**FOCUS on One Mission**

# SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 15-17, 2013  
Shocco Springs

**Theme:** PRESS ON — *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 3:13-14 (NAS)

**Preacher:** Gary Miller, Westview Baptist Church, Opp

**Celebration Leader:** Jamey Pruett, Gilliam Springs Baptist Church, Arab

**Musician:** Ed Cleveland, First Baptist Church, Montgomery

**Registration/Costs:** [www.shocco.org](http://www.shocco.org) or 1-800-280-1105 (The cost per person is based upon choice of lodging at Shocco.)

Spring is the perfect time of year to get out, get away, retreat from the normal routines of life, spend time reflecting on God's goodness and seek anew His direction for our lives. Join many other senior adults as we worship and praise God and share a joyful time beginning with lunch on **Monday, April 15**, and ending with lunch on **Wednesday, April 17**.

For other information contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, [emitchell@alsbom.org](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org).

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



## Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference

As we approach our AABS Conference, **MARCH 3-6, 2012**, we have several breakout sessions that will help us "Be Joyful, Faithful and Prayerful" in our ministry positions.

Professional Certification classes in leadership and ministry will be offered. Occupational classes will be available, such as: Excel, QuickBooks, Grammar, iPod, Google and Ministry, Publisher, Advanced PowerPoint, What's New with Tax/Finances Issues, Basic Financial Policies and Retention Schedule, Charitable Contributions and Emergency Response. Available also will be GuideStone retirement and health plan opportunities to review. Spiritual and personal classes will be available, including: "A True Walk with Christ," "Miracles out of John," Grief, Importance of Ministries, Encouragement, Sandwich Generation, Men and Women Getting Along, How to Clear Clutter out of Your Life and Jewelry Making.

We pray that any one of these breakout sessions would be a benefit to our ministries as each person follows God's direction in the lives of our personal and ministry opportunities.

For updates and other details, please go online to [www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com](http://www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com).

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## Intentional MINISTRY DESIGN Conference

Intentionally Developing Church Leadership That God Can Use

Online Information: [www.alsbom.org/imdc](http://www.alsbom.org/imdc)

**MINISTRY BREAKOUT TOPICS:**

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- Worship Music
- Church Administration
- Assimilation
- Christian Education
- Senior Adult Ministry
- Missions and Family Ministry

- Youth
- Singles
- Children
- Preschool
- Mom's Day Out
- Media

**Lindsay Lane Church, Athens**  
Thursday, February 7, 2013  
9 a.m.-2 p.m.

**COST:** \$15 per person includes lunch

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, [jallen@alsbom.org](mailto:jallen@alsbom.org).



praying **ACROSS** alabama

II Chron. 7:14

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60 Days of Prayer sign-up and additional information.

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

# Strong stand

## ERLC leaders voice support for immigration reform, some gun control measures

In the same week, leaders of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) took a strong stand on two major issues facing the nation — gun control and immigration reform.

Richard Land, ERLC's president, wrote President Obama Jan. 15 supporting gun-control measures that don't infringe on the Second Amendment's right to bear arms. He voiced support for mandatory criminal background checks for all gun sales and making gun trafficking a federal crime.

In the letter, Land called on President Obama to "focus your efforts on practical means to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally unstable, without adversely restricting firearms from law-abiding citizens." He said the right of law-abiding citizens to bear arms "remains one of the surest deterrents of gun violence in our nation."

Land's letter coincided with a letter from 47 faith leaders including representatives of the Alliance of Baptists, American Baptist Churches USA and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, urging action to curb violence like the Dec. 14 shooting in Newtown, Conn., that killed 20 first graders and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

The letter, organized by Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, asked members of Congress to enact laws similar to those proposed by Land, but added an additional

demand for a ban on high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines.

Land urged Obama to consider regional differences in policies aimed at curbing gun violence.

"We consider an effort to apply the same gun restriction laws across the entire populace to be unworkable and of considerable offense to many," Land wrote. "We recommend that you allow the individual states' elected representatives to decide whether to implement any restrictions you may choose to enforce or to enact their own restrictions based on the needs and interests of their own citizens."

The Southern Baptist Convention has never taken a formal stand on gun control with the exception of a single sentence in a 1968 resolution on violence that commended "the President's urgent plea to Congress to 'pass laws to bring the insane traffic in guns to a halt,' while maintaining the constitutional right to the legitimate possession of arms."

### Immigration reform

At a Jan. 17 news conference in Washington, Barrett Duke, ERLC vice president for public policy and research, voiced the commission's determination to make immigration reform a priority.

"We do not intend to let this fail," Duke said. "We will stay on top of this until Washington, D.C., and our country finally [do] what is right by the 12 million who are

here looking to us to do something to help resolve their dilemma."

Americans with widely divergent views have contended for years the federal government's failure to deal with immigration has resulted in a broken system and from 11 to 12 million undocumented, or illegal, immigrants in this country.

While advocates for immigration reform have various reasons for their support, it is a moral and humanitarian issue for the ERLC, Duke said. In the Bible, God instructs His Old Testament people, the Israelites, to love the stranger among them, Duke said.

"[W]hen we read that, we understand that God has an expectation for how a people

with power would treat those who are vulnerable and weak in their presence," he told reporters.

"It is not possible to respond to the plight of those who are here living in the shadows compassionately without actually speaking to their circumstances in trying to assist them," Duke said. "I don't know how you could have a clear conscience thinking that we're going to in some kind of way consign 12 million people possibly to perpetual poverty and as a perpetual underclass in this country. ... It is simply not the right thing to do. It is certainly not the humanitarian thing to do. It is indeed not the Christian thing to do." (BP, ABP)



LAND

## Kiryat Gat's only Messianic Jewish church hit by arsonists in Israel

The only Messianic Jewish church in Israel's southern town of Kiryat Gat was burned down by unidentified assailants in early January.

The Kiryat Gat congregation is under the auspices of Beit Hallel Messianic Congregation in the nearby coastal city of Ashdod. Pastor Israel Pochtar of Beit Hallel posted the following message regarding the apparent arson attack: "A few weeks ago our congregation in Kiryat Gat was burned down. It is the only congregation in the city, has a big vision for the future, involved in helping many people. Evidently, our influence in the city has been a cause of 'concern' to some and they decided to

stop our work by setting the building on fire."

It happened one night after a service when someone threw a Molotov cocktail, a gasoline bomb, through a window and caught the church on fire, Pochtar wrote.

No one has claimed responsibility for the arson attack, but "it was obvious that it was an attack of a religious nature against us," he wrote.

"This was the only gathering place for our Kiryat Gat congregation that now is left without a place to meet and worship. The damage is not only to the building itself, all the music equipment inside was also destroyed." (Israel Today)

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Photo courtesy of Kip McKee

### FRIENDS GRADUATE FROM NEW ORLEANS SEMINARY

Kip McKee (second from left), pastor of Silver Run Baptist Church, Seale, and Bill Evans (second from right), pastor of Hopewell Baptist Church, Pinson, graduated Dec. 15, 2012, each with a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. McKee went through the master of divinity program in the 90s and then served as a military chaplain until 2004. Evans has served Hopewell Baptist for 13 years and McKee has served Silver Run for 11 years. The two friends decided to get their doctor of ministry degrees together in 2010. Pictured with them are their wives, Gina McKee (left) and Shelia Evans (right).

# 'UNIQUE'

By **Brittany N. Ragon**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

## Christian camps can offer 'real picture of long-term, life-changing effect of gospel'

**C**hristian camp ministry is not a new idea. The tides of the spiritual retreat experience have risen and fallen since the late 1800s, with terminology advancing from camp meetings to Christian camping to Bible conferences to church camp. No doubt, the average churchgoer over the age of 40 has heard it all.

But as the terminology describing Christian camp ministry has changed over the last 150 years, so have the ministry's methods.

Now camp culture is seeing a rise in ministries like Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters (SWO), a high-adventure Christian camp nestled between the Ocoee and Nantahala rivers in western North Carolina.

Reared the son of a pastor, SWO Director and Cofounder Brody Holloway grew up in traditional camp ministry, attending camps as a student and working at even more camps in his teen and early adult years.

"The one thing my camp experiences had in common was a false picture of what it was to follow Christ," he said. "It was a feel-good gospel."

This is where the battle for effective camp ministry is fought, Holloway said.

### 'Roller-coaster effect'

"Historically over the last 30 years, there has been a roller-coaster effect in the way 'camp impact' has trended," he said. "For instance, a guy in student ministry who has taken his kids to camp or inherited students who have a camp-type experience is sorting through what was real and what was emotional. For us, the vision was: 'Let's don't throw the baby out with the bath water.' We don't need to eliminate camps from student ministry. We need to work to utilize, in a positive way, that camp experience with the goal of long-term discipleship."

Ric Manning, student pastor of Pine Grove Baptist Church, Centre, in Cherokee Baptist Association, said he sees camp as an effective part of his student ministry because it "gives students an opportunity to hear a fresh voice in a setting away from their normal environment. It is a blessing to have camp staff share the same things you are teaching [your students] on a regular basis but with the talents God has given them."

For SWO, that teaching is "gospel-centered discipleship by any means necessary," Holloway said.

"Unfortunately a lot of camp situations are the equivalent of spiritual child abuse, where we mess with students' feelings and mess with their emotions but we don't give them a

real picture of the long-term, life-changing effect of the gospel," he said. "We say things like, 'Come forward and pray to receive Christ; it is the greatest decision you'll ever make' or 'Christianity is cool' or 'Christians can have fun.' But Jesus makes it clear that the cost of discipleship is that we lose

our lives for the sake of gospel." So SWO created a three-tiered approach for effective camp ministry: Relational investments in the lives of its staff and students, shared experience as a means of sharing the gospel and expositional teaching to create a strong biblical foundation.

"So what we're doing is equipping students to pursue Christ and surrender to Him daily, not only to be saved by the gospel but to live and grow by the gospel. That's what gospel-centered means," Holloway said.

One way this is done at SWO is by creating an opportunity for per-

sonal relationship to trickle down from year-round staff to summer staff to students, which starts with ensuring its 40 year-round staff and 100 summer staffers are well trained and knowledgeable in biblical doctrine.

"Our staff spends the course of an entire semester in training for

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# platform'

summer work, which culminates in 17 days of training at our facility," Holloway explained. "So there's discipling, training and investing in our staff after a strenuous selection process and then a continued investment in our staff throughout the summer."

Holloway said that is important because investment in staff spills over into students, and it must be held together by a love for the gospel.

And SWO also strives to develop ongoing partnerships with churches so camp isn't a one-time experience, but it becomes a "go-to" for student pastors throughout the year through Disciple Now weekends, purity weekends, guy/girl conferences, summer camp and leadership conferences.

But it's the opportunity to participate in more than two dozen recreation options that often draws students to SWO. This creates a

multitude of shared experiences through which relationships are built and a door to share the gospel is opened, Holloway said.

From whitewater rafting, zip lines and wakeboarding to mountain biking, snowboarding, paintball and a water slide, "it's a series of once-in-a-lifetime experiences packed into one weekend or weeklong event," Holloway said. "Shared experiences get walls down quickly with students."

Those established relationships then revolve around expositional teaching in worship services, breakout sessions and small group meetings.

In 2011, Barna Group, a research organization focused on faith and culture, reported a leading reason for "young Christians" leaving the church was that their Christian experience was "shallow." Respondents' reasons included: "Church is boring;" "Faith is not relevant to my career or interests;" "The Bible is not taught clearly or often enough;" and "God seems missing from my experience of church."



Photos courtesy of Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters

Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters summer staff member Maggie Maddox (rear center) guides a group of students down the Nantahala River during a week of summer camp.

These are the very things that drive the ministry at SWO, Holloway said.



HOLLOWAY

"Students need to be challenged and pushed to do hard things, to do something other than be a consumer when it comes to Christianity. Camp gives us a platform to look a kid in the face and say, 'What are you going to do with the gospel?' Bible-belt Christianity is mild Christianity. Camp gives us the opportunity to challenge students — to call them to do something with what they've been given through the gospel."

Now, 16 years into the actualized vision of SWO, Holloway said his passion for camp ministry is the same.

"I'm passionate about our

system because we've seen the long-term effects of it," he said. "We've seen 30 of our former students who have become staff go to serve with the International Mission Board as journeymen. But we have also seen at least double that many people come through as students and then as staff who are serving in church ministry, many of them as student pastors and student pastors' wives. In a word, it works."

### 'A great vision'

But this is only the beginning, he added. "Camp is a unique platform that had been left in a static state for a few decades — not utilized in the way it should be. Not that we have in any way 'arrived,' but we feel like the Lord has moved us into a position where He's shown us the fruit. The greatest days of student ministry and camp ministry partnership are ahead of us. We have a great vision for the future." ❧

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# Historical Highlights

from previous issues of *The Alabama Baptist*

## 50 Years Ago January 1963

Winston Association Sponsors Mission: Winston Baptist Association is sponsoring "The Mission of the Forest" in the Grayson area. Citizens of the lumber-company city deep inside the 179,000-acre Bankhead National Forest are happy that regular religious services are being conducted there. Claude Bartlett is serving as the mission pastor and is being assisted with the music and teaching programs

by Bobby Prater and Jasper Bailey, of Double Springs, and Phil Wilson, of Arley. James Burke is the associational missionary.

## 40 Years Ago January 1973

Alabama Baptists at Equatorial Baptist Seminary: James Loyd Moon, a native of Gurley and missionary to Brazil since appointment by the Foreign Mission Board in 1951, was installed as president of the Equatorial Baptist Seminary

during graduation exercises Dec. 2, 1972. Alabama Baptists have a close relationship to this seminary. Paul Edwin Sanderson, of Birmingham, was selected by the Equatorial Brazil Baptist Mission to found the institution in 1955. Other Alabamians to serve on the faculty have been missionaries Sue Patrick Vernon, Fred and Hazel Halbrooks and Mary Hazel Moon. Thomas Halsell, pastor of Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, was the first president, serving for 10 years.

four professors who have served a total of 75 years. Alabamians honored were Carroll B. Freeman Sr., retired after 18 years as professor of psychology and counseling. Freeman was pastor of Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Anniston, 1961-65. Harold Bryson, who was chairman of the seminary's division of pastoral ministries and professor of preaching recently resigned after 16 years of service. He had formerly served as pastor of five churches, including Eastdale Baptist Church, Montgomery.

## 30 Years Ago January 1983

Samford Recognizes Employees: Four Samford employees were honored for their 35 years of service at the Service Awards Dinner. They are Ray Atchison, professor of English; Gene Kelsner, secretary to the president; Herbert A. McCullough, distinguished biology professor; and Margaret D. Sizemore, assistant to the president.

## 20 Years Ago January 1993

Alabamians Honored at New Orleans Seminary: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary honored

## 10 Years Ago January 2003

Alabama Pastor Receives Award: Pine Level Baptist Church Pastor Bob Anders received the 2002 Chaplain of the Year plaque from the Reserve Officers Association. As chaplain of the 908th Airlift Wing, United States Air Force Reserve, at Maxwell Air Force Base, Anders ministers to about 5,000 people. He said he is "blessed with two congregations" and values deployment because it allows him the opportunity to build relationships with the reservists.

Compiled by Kathleen Prude

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**FULL-TIME PASTOR:** Ocean View Baptist Church of Myrtle Beach, S.C., is seeking resumés for an experienced senior pastor with a minimum of 5 years experience. We desire a gifted teacher that can impart spiritual truth in a broad spectrum of services ranging from very contemporary to traditional. Our church emphasizes discipleship and missions. A seminary degree is required but not administrative skills. Please send your resumé to: Ocean View Baptist Church, c/o The Search Committee, 7300 North Kings Highway, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572. We will receive resumés until March 1.

**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.

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

**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: worshipping@bonairbaptist.org.

**PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Rangeline Baptist Church of Demopolis, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of music. We enjoy a blended mix of worship music. Mail resumé to: Rangeline Baptist Church, ATTN: Music Committee, 5809 County Road 19, Linden, AL 36748.

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

### OTHER POSITIONS

**OFFICE MANAGER:** Grace Life Baptist Church is seeking someone that is self-directed, detail-oriented and highly organized to fulfill the role of office manager. Candidates need to demonstrate excellent oral/written communication skills, problem-solving capabilities and flexibility/adaptability. Proficiency in Microsoft Office is required and experience with church database software (ACS) is preferred. We are looking for 2 years or more related experience and would prefer a candidate with an associate degree or higher, but the minimum education required is a high school diploma. If qualified and interested, send your resumé to: 6200 Lou George Loop, Bessemer, AL 35022, ATTN: Sharon Holland or email to: sharonh@yourgracelife.com.

**PIANIST:** New Cedron Baptist Church of Billingsley is prayerfully receiving resumés for piano player. Send resumé to: New Cedron Baptist Church, 14581 County Road 37, Billingsley, AL 36006, or to: bowens@bellsouth.net.

**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.

**INDEPENDENT SALES ASSOCIATE CONTRACTOR:** The 170-year-old *Alabama Baptist* is an award-winning statewide weekly newspaper with more than 200,000 readers. Baptists comprise the largest Christian denomination in Alabama with membership of more than a million. *The Alabama Baptist* is seeking contract sales people with the ability to develop advertising partnerships with businesses and organizations interested in reaching the key demographics of our readers and growing their business. As an independent sales associate contractor, you would work from your home office with no territory restrictions. *The Alabama Baptist*, Inc. provides a unique working environment. We are partners with the churches of the Alabama Baptist State Convention working together for the advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each employee is expected to manage his/her personal and professional life in accordance with this relationship and consistent with the traditions of *The Alabama Baptist*. Send resumés and inquiries to: bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

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### FOR SALE

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## Want to know God?

By Billy Reinhardt  
Minister of youth

Mountain View Baptist Church, Wetumpka

In relation to a sinful woman who poured out a beautiful expression of love to Him (Luke 7:36-50), Jesus said in Luke 7:47, "Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that's why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little." What is the reason she loved much? The answer is because "her many sins have been forgiven."

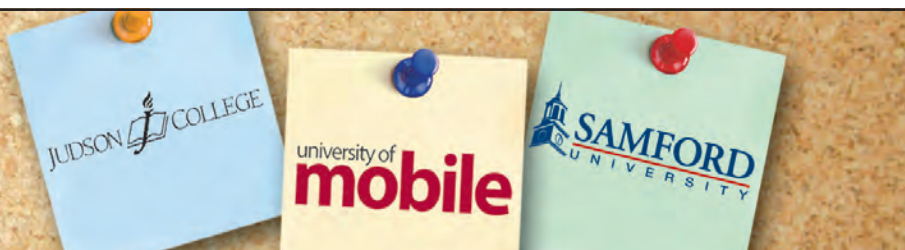
Do you know the difference between a general receipt and an itemized receipt? A general receipt simply has the total cost, the date and the store from which you purchased it. The itemized receipt, however, would not just have this general information on it, but it would also record the specific items purchased, along with their specific costs, line by line.

The general receipt is analogous to how we sometimes view our sins before God. If we take a general receipt view of God's forgiveness for sins, then we'll make general statements like, "Yes, God forgives sins," or "Yes, God loves sinners." However, in acknowledging and confessing our many sins, these statements are not specific enough.

Our love for God is directly proportional to our realization of Jesus' forgiveness of our many sins. Instead of general statements, we should take the itemized receipt view and say, "God has forgiven my lust for that person," or "God has forgiven my adultery with that person on that date," or "God has forgiven my greed for that specific item." The goal is to name, and therefore own, our sins specifically so as to better realize God's great love and forgiveness for us.

Do you realize your many sins today? John 1:8-9 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Have you confessed your specific sins to God today? Forgiveness for your "many sins" is available today if you'll confess them and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. ☩

# CAMPUS News



## JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Beeson Professor Extols C.S. Lewis As Model For Modern Christians:** Lyle Dorsett was an accomplished academician with a doctorate, teaching American history at the University of Denver, when he was challenged by a stu-

dent to read two classic Christian writers: G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis.

Dorsett committed his life to Christ and became a lifelong student of Lewis. He wrote "The Essential C.S. Lewis," "Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C.S. Lewis" and a biography of Lewis' wife, "And God Came In: The Extraordi-

nary Story of Joy Davidman."

Dorsett, professor of evangelism at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, was guest speaker at Judson College's recent Christian Emphasis Week. He lectured for two days on the work of Lewis and spent an afternoon with local pastors talking about the work of congregational ministry.

Judson student Carli Ludlow, of Pine Hall, heard both lectures and said she felt Dorsett made Lewis "friendly" for all ages, showing how young and old can relate to him.

## UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Art Exhibit Features 'Functional Works in Porcelain':** The University of Mobile (UMobile) art department will host Branen Mercer, a specialist in ceramic art, in an exhibit titled "Functional Works in Porcelain." The exhibit runs through Feb. 28 in Martin Hall Gallery on the UMobile campus.

The exhibit will feature the Fairhope artist's current body of work, which is a study of form and function. Mercer focuses on lines, surfaces and volume. The subtle surfaces are absent of glaze, leaving only a porcelain body that has been sanded five times to a satin white surface, a trademark of Mercer's current style.

Mercer graduated from Auburn University in 2008 with a bachelor

of fine arts in ceramics. After college, he traveled to St. Petersburg, Fla., to work as a resident at The Craftsman House Gallery. He is the studio manager at The Kiln Studio and Gallery in Fairhope where he crafts his own work and teaches.

For more information about visual arts at UMobile, call 251-442-2283.

## SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Beeson to Offer Lay Academy Classes:** Samford University's Beeson Divinity School will offer a variety of evening and weekday study opportunities through its Lay Academy of Theology this winter and spring. The classes are designed to be of interest to laity as well as ministers.

The evening schedule includes courses that will meet one night a week for six weeks beginning in February. Each will begin at 6 p.m. and meet for two hours. For information on topics, leaders and dates, visit [www.beesondivinity.com](http://www.beesondivinity.com) or contact Lorrie Beth Milton or Jim Pounds at 205-726-2731.



**Pastor Joe's daughter says there's an easier way to store his favorite clips from the state Baptist newspaper. She stores them on her computer. His son saves the links in his phone. But Pastor Joe still prefers the actual newsprint.**



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 3

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

### CAN I GET A WITNESS? Amos 7:4-17

#### Interceding Witness (4-6)

Chapter 7 of Amos opens with visions given to Amos.

In the first vision God sends locusts to eat up all the crops, which would lead to widespread famine. Amos cries out for God to spare Israel, and He does. In the second vision, God sends fire in order to judge Israel. Again Amos pleads with God not to carry out this judgment, and once again God relents.

Amos acting in such a way shows the power of intercession. God desires that we pray and ask on behalf of other people because God answers prayer.

Some Christians choose not to pray because they think that it serves no purpose. If God is all-knowing, then why will He "change His mind" if I pray? Won't He do what He has already determined to do? However, the Bible shows that on several occasions God relents. He states He is going to do something only to stop because of the prayers of someone. This should motivate us to pray on behalf of others, especially praying for the salvation of our unsaved acquaintances.

#### Truth-Telling Witness (7-9)

In the third vision in the chapter Amos sees God with a plumb line held up against a wall that represents Israel.

God is using the plumb line to see if the wall is straight. Israel is God's chosen people; they were supposed to build their society according to God's Law. Instead the wall is not straight because Israel has worshipped foreign gods and has not lived according to God's commands. This shows Amos that God is going to carry out His judgment. Turning away from God to foreign gods is too much for God to bear, and He is going to punish Israel so that they turn back to Him.

#### Opposed Witness (10-13)

At this point the priest Amaziah tells

Jeroboam, the king of Israel, about Amos' prophecy and tells him how Amos' prophecy is against Jeroboam and Israel. Amaziah confronts Amos and tells him to leave and go back to Judah. He did not want to hear the true word of the Lord — neither did Jeroboam.

In many instances, the corrupt kings of Israel would have prophets and priests who would only tell them things that they wanted to hear. It is no different in our society today. Telling people about Jesus and preaching the gospel is an offense. It tells us that we are sinners and separated from a holy and righteous God and that we can do nothing on our own to remedy the situation — only God can remedy the situation, which He did by coming in the flesh, suffering and dying for mankind. Society does not want to hear this. They do not want to hear that they fall short and are sinners, and so they demand that we change our message. Society says we should embrace all religions and embrace views like homosexuality, but these views are counter to what the Bible teaches.

#### Obedient Witness (14-17)

Amaziah suggests that Amos is a professional prophet who prophesies for money, which is apparently how the corrupt prophets of Israel behaved.

Instead Amos tells Amaziah his credentials — he was a shepherd and he also tended flocks. He was not a professional prophet; rather he was called by God to prophesy — how could Amaziah argue against the message he was relaying? And because of God's displeasure with Amaziah and what he represented — a corrupt and distorted representation of God — God would punish him along with Israel.

When we encounter opposition, we do not respond by changing the message to tell people what they want to hear. Christians will face opposition for stating what the Bible says, and we need to persist in presenting the true message of the gospel and not try to make it acceptable to our hearers.

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

### THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 12-20

"You can take that to the bank" is a saying sometimes used to refer to confidence about something or the truth of something. Of course these days the saying isn't used quite as much, given the bank failures and economic challenges some trusted financial institutions have experienced.

Our unit of lessons this month includes some trustworthy sayings of the apostle Paul regarding the life of faith. These are important, practical teachings that we can "take to the bank." They have timeless truth relevant for our challenging lives in these challenging times.

#### Avoid Distractions to the Truth (3-7)

Vance Havner, a popular Baptist preacher from a few decades past, was sometimes compared to Yogi Berra because of his comical, wise sayings. He preached at the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference in 1975. I still recall him saying, "Some Christians are so heavenly minded they do no earthly good." Maybe you have listened in on or been part of a conversation about some topic related to faith that, while important to discuss, was certainly no topic needing lengthy debate or consideration. Yet, based on the passionate presentation of ideas and opinions, one might have thought the very foundation of the Christian faith was dependent on conclusions drawn from the conversation.

Paul may have had in mind these kinds of distracting debates that can adversely impact the practice of one's faith. Paul calls for Timothy to instruct teachers who engage in such time-wasting doctrinal debates to move on to more important teachings of the gospel. Faith applied and active in one's life is more important than words about faith with little application in real life.

#### Take Your Stand on the Truth (12-17)

"This saying is trustworthy" (15), a

phrase found only in Paul's letters, gives emphasis to the insight or teaching that followed. A self-described first-class sinner, Paul experienced firsthand forgiveness and salvation through Christ, who "came into the world to save sinners." For him, the gospel was not merely the words of Jesus and teachings of the Church passed along through the testimony of apostles and recognized leaders of the early church. The gospel was a bona fide reality in his life and was much more than concept or idea. He experienced in real time the truth of the gospel, that through Christ one can be put in a right relationship with God.

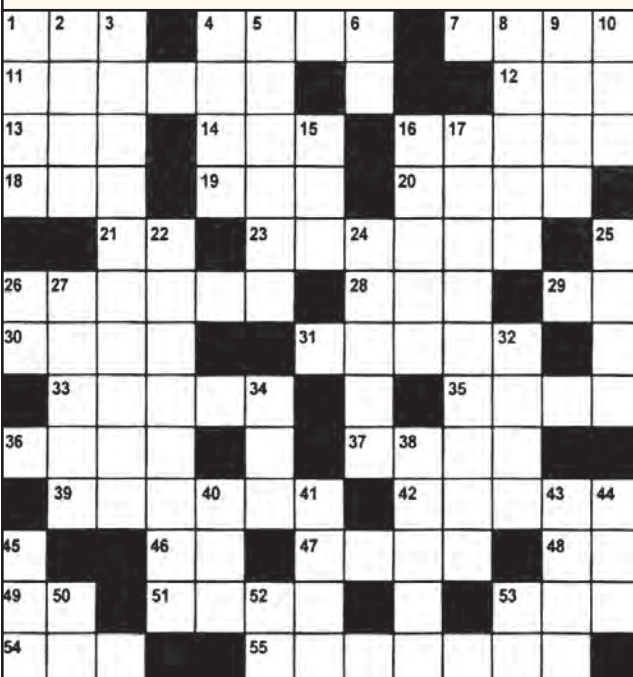
#### Battle for the Truth (18-20)

Both of Paul's letters to Timothy contain metaphors related to military service. The meaning of the metaphors would be easily understood among people living under Roman authority, subject to Roman military might. The apostle instructs Timothy to "fight the good fight" for the faith. Like a good soldier Timothy should stand firm, not retreat, in the presence of the enemy. In Timothy's context the battle involved false belief and improper teaching about the faith. Paul identified two persons as examples of the enemy Timothy should be aware of. These persons made a "shipwreck" of their faith. This is an interesting and vivid metaphor for the catastrophe that occurs when one abandons the teachings of Christ and the gospel way of living Jesus modeled. Just as Paul experienced being saved the three times he was shipwrecked, so too can shipwrecked, disobedient, faithless people who have turned away from the way of righteousness.

Sometimes God allows us to go our own way even when the way we choose leads to a "shipwreck" in our life and faith. These times can be instructive; they can be redemptive. Sometimes we have to experience brokenness, helplessness and a sense of being lost without hope before we realize our need for rescue and restoration. Paul's instruction to Timothy is a good word for us as well.

## Christian Crossword

By Helen Walter Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

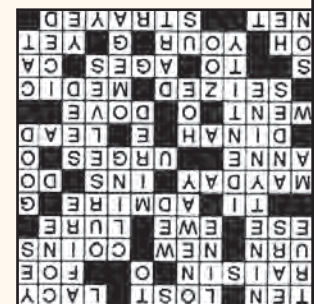
- Having \_\_\_ pieces of silver. (Luke 15:8)
- I have found my sheep which was \_\_\_ . (Luke 15:6)
- Having a delicate, open pattern.
- A dried grape.
- Enemy.
- Vase.
- I saw a \_\_\_ heaven. (Rev. 21:1)
- Pieces of silver.
- Direction.
- Abraham set seven \_\_\_ lambs. (Gen. 21:28)
- Entice.
- Musical note.
- Have a high regard for.
- Signal for help.
- \_\_\_ and outs.
- That thou doest, \_\_\_ quickly. (John 13:27)
- Woman's name.
- Entreats earnestly.

- Jacob's daughter. (Ps. 19:9)
- He that hath \_\_\_ to hear. (Mark 4:9)
- Number of sheep safe in the fold. (Matt. 18:12)
- Ending for fishing \_\_\_ or clothes \_\_\_.
- In one direction only.
- Toward.
- Burning.
- Ice cream \_\_\_.
- Opposite of no.
- Married.
- Hold fast.
- Us.
- Individuality.
- Stuck in the mud.
- I am the \_\_\_ shepherd. (John 10:11)
- Mother.
- South American mountain range.
- Like a grain of mustard \_\_\_ . (Luke 13:19)
- A garden tool.

### Down

- The judgments of the Lord are \_\_\_ .

- I am Alpha and \_\_\_ . (Rev. 1:8)
- Animal home.
- Arrow.
- Frosted.
- Domestic animal.
- Thou art my beloved \_\_\_ . (Luke 3:22)
- \_\_\_ is not here. (Matt. 28:6)
- Let \_\_\_ make man. (Gen. 1:26)
- That \_\_\_ love one another. (John 13:34)



# Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

## SBC President Luter awarded 2013 Carver Medal

INDIANOLA, Iowa — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter has been awarded the 2013 Carver Medal of Simpson College. The Iowa school hailed Luter as exemplifying the commitment and service of the late agricultural scientist, inventor and Christian, George Washington Carver.

John Byrd, president of the private United Methodist Church-related college in Indianola, recognized Luter as courageous and committed to faith in Christ in the face of challenging obstacles.

"I believe George Washington Carver would have recognized some of his own experiences in the life of ... Fred Luter," Byrd said.

Byrd recognized Luter's achievements not only as the first African American elected as president of the SBC but also as pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, having grown the congregation from 50 members to more than 8,500 over 25 years and sparking the church's restoration after Hurricane Katrina flooded the facility and scattered the membership over several states.

Luter humbly accepted the medal and delivered the Carver Lecture.

"Simpson College, I promise you, if you continue to be faithful to God, God will continue to be faithful to you," he said during the Jan. 24 ceremony. "Ladies and gentlemen," Luter said, waving his arms in the air, "you will be amazed what can happen in your life ... in your home, in your marriage if you're faithful to God."

## Former Mississippi pastor pleads guilty to abuse

CLINTON, Miss. — John Langworthy, 50, former associate pastor of music and ministries at Morrison Heights Baptist Church, Clinton, Miss., pleaded guilty in Hinds County Circuit Court to five of eight felony counts of gratification of lust against young boys in the early 1980s. He was sentenced to 10 years of a suspended sentence on each count for a total of 50 years.

As part of his agreement, Langworthy will be on five years of supervised probation, cannot have contact with any of his victims and must register as a sex offender.

Langworthy was investigated by police after a video was posted online of him confessing to members of Morrison Heights Baptist in August 2011 that he "had sexual indiscretions with younger males" prior to coming to Clinton 22 years earlier. Afterward six men came forward claiming they were sexually abused by Langworthy as children in the early 1980s.

Two of his victims testified Jan. 22 about the impact of Langworthy's actions on their lives. One of the two said after 30 years, some people say it is time that they forgive and forget. "In some ways that is true," the victim's impact statement read. "We must forgive, and I want you to know, John, that I did a long time ago. Why we are here is not because of vengeance or retribution. It is not to get even or get payback. It is simply about bringing the darkness to the light." The young man said he also wanted Langworthy to know he considers himself not a "victim" but rather a "survivor by the grace of God" of sexual abuse.

## Texas woman nominated to lead CBF

ATLANTA — Suzii Paynter, the first woman to serve as director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Christian Life Commission, has been nominated as third executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

If elected, Paynter would join Sharon Watkins of the Disciples of Christ and the Episcopal Church's Katharine Jefferts Schori as one of the few women ever to lead a national denominational organization in the United States.

She also would join a select sisterhood of women in top leadership roles in conventions and unions affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance, alongside names like Regina Claas, secretary general of the Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany since 2003, and Karin Wilburn, who stepped down two years ago as general secretary of the Baptist Union of Sweden to become head of the nation's ecumenical movement.

Paynter is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, with master's degrees from Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas, and the University of Louisville. She was elected head of the Texas CLC in 2006. Before that she served five years as the agency's citizenship and public policy director.

Paynter is a frequent teacher and ordained deacon at First Baptist Church, Austin, Texas, where her husband, Roger, is pastor.

# 'Nowhere but Up'

## Bieber's mom raises awareness of abortion with pro-life short film

**M**ega popstar Justin Bieber's mom hopes to raise \$10 million for crisis pregnancy centers around the world with a new pro-life short film.

Pattie Mallette, an outspoken Christian, said the cause was personal to her because a crisis pregnancy center helped her when she got pregnant with Bieber at 17.

Mallette has partnered with Movie to Movement to promote "Crescendo," a short film based in the 18th century that deals with abortion. They hope to host 1,000 screenings of the film starting Feb. 28, with Mallette, the film's executive producer, sharing her story at some of them.

Mallette grew up in a broken home in Stratford, Ontario, according to her 2012 autobiography "Nowhere but Up." Her alcoholic father left when she was just two, and she was sexually abused from age 3 to 14. She said the abandonment issues and abuse led her to drugs, theft and depression in her teens.

## Finding Christ

She tried to commit suicide by throwing herself in front of a bus when she was 17 and was sent to a mental ward, where she became a Christian.

Afterward she returned to her past life and soon found herself pregnant with her longtime boyfriend's child.

Many friends told her to abort her baby, but she kept him because of her faith.

"I knew that I had to do what it took," she wrote. "I just couldn't abort him." Her parents kicked her out of the house and she stayed at a home for pregnant women.

She gave birth to Bieber in 1994 and lived off welfare and the paychecks from part-time jobs. She finished high school and began to study web design in college.

At the same time, Bieber earned money singing on the streets and playing the drums and guitar. When he was 13, Hollywood came calling after his YouTube videos went viral. Mallette and Bieber soon moved to the U.S. to pursue his career.



RNS photo  
Justin Bieber's mother Pattie Mallette (right) chose not to abort Bieber (left) because of her faith.

The pop singer is now the third most powerful celebrity in the world, according to *Forbes Magazine*.

Mallette's pro-life stance also has influenced her son. Bieber caused controversy in 2011 when he said in a *Rolling Stone* interview, "I really don't believe in abortion. I think [an embryo] is a human. It's like killing a baby."

Mallette said she hopes "Crescendo" and the fundraising for crisis pregnancy centers will "encourage young women all over the world, just like me, to let them know that there is a place to go, people who will take care of you and a safe home to live in if you are pregnant and think you have nowhere else to turn." (WORLD on Campus)

**"I really don't believe in abortion. I think [an embryo] is a human. It's like killing a baby."**

Justin Bieber



IMB photo

A young man from an indigenous tribe in South America reflects the pride his people have in their land. It was once taken from them by European settlers and cleared for pasture, but the land is now returning to its natural state.

## Remote tribes in South America among 3,129 people groups hungry for gospel

**G**race, a member of one of the indigenous tribes of South America, speaks with intensity about the future of her people.

There are outsiders who would keep them in something of a museum — as living history, she said — stuck in a time that has not been a reality for generations.

It's not what she wants. Yet the issue is not an easy one.

"A lot of our people don't even know our [culture]," she said. "They say they do, but they hide behind it."

She wants her people to move ahead — to "win." She wants them to take advantage of all that is going on about them while retaining the best of their culture.

That means they will have to change, she said.

Grace has been active — militant, she said — in the Indian rights movement. She and her sister have traveled to New York and Florida for conferences. They were part of a group that surrounded the Catholic church in a nearby town and demanded their land back, threatening to breach a dam and flood the town if they didn't get it.

Land disputes between Indians and others have been fierce. Non-Indians have hired gunmen to threaten the Indians. People on both sides have died.

When Grace talks about Christianity, she speaks of a mix of indigenous, tribal religion; folk Catholicism; superstition and spiritualism; and Catholic dogma. Few from the tribe embrace it. They say they prefer to hold with their traditional faith.

She has met some evangelicals — her term for everyone who is not Catholic — and was not impressed.

"They have faith," she said, "but they don't have love. Faith without love isn't worth much."

A visitor tells Grace her words are straight from the Bible. "Next time you come, bring your Bible," she said. "I want to know more about it." The visitor said he has one with him. Grace asks him to get it. For 20 minutes they talk, flipping from verse to verse as they converse.

The visitor is astonished at how much of what she said is virtually a paraphrase of the New Testament — a text she has never read.

"There have been times in my life that have been so

hard," she said, "I've wondered if there was something else out there."

Grace and her tribe are among 3,129 unengaged, unreached peoples across the world. Nearly 400 of them are in South America. Isolated by language, culture, history and — in some cases — geography, they live mostly in small clusters of fewer than 3,000 people.

Most will never have a missionary assigned to them. Yet the church is called to take the gospel to all peoples.

Gifts to the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering allow International Mission Board

personnel to identify and understand these often forgotten people.

Those efforts offer Southern Baptist churches committed to embracing unengaged, unreached peoples a basis for beginning their work among them — to be His heart, His hands and His voice.

Pray that Grace's people truly will "win" and have the opportunity to hear about their Savior. Pray that your church will be one to embrace an unengaged, unreached people group that might not otherwise hear the gospel. For more information, visit [call2embrace.org](http://call2embrace.org). (IMB)

**Nearly 400 of the 3,129 unengaged, unreached people groups in the world are in South America. Isolated by language, culture, history and — in some cases — geography, they live mostly in small clusters of fewer than 3,000 people.**



IMB photo

A child curiously watches visitors to her isolated village. She knows nothing of Jesus. More than 3,000 people groups in the world are not only unreached but unengaged.