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BP photo
Pedestrians crowd the sidewalks and streets in Chengdu, China.

'Spiritual pollution'

Persecution of Christians continues to rise for 7th straight year in China

Government persecution of Christians in China increased in 2012 for the seventh consecutive year, ChinaAid reported Feb. 4, with the government especially moving to eradicate house churches.

Data collected by ChinaAid in 2012 showed a 125 percent increase in sentences and a 41.9 percent increase in incidences of persecution over 2011, according to the religious liberty group's 2012 annual report.

Specifically, a total of 132 cases of persecution across China targeted

4,919 individuals, including 442 clergy; the detaining of 1,441, including 236 clergy; and the sentencing of nine people. In 2011, ChinaAid reported 93 cases of persecution, involving 4,322 individuals, 337 of them clergy; the detaining of 1,289 individuals, including 267 church leaders; and the sentencing of four individuals.

Worsening persecution

"Compared with the statistics in ChinaAid's past annual reports, this trend of worsening persecution has persisted for the past seven years," the report said, "with an average increase of 24.5 percent in the total of all six categories of persecution statistics tracked by ChinaAid."

A secret Chinese government document issued in September 2011, which was released by ChinaAid, verified the focus on eradicating the house church, as did the number of incidences reported.

The government, according to the secret document, was engaged in forcibly banning and sealing churches, pressuring congregations to join the official "Three-Self" church, detaining church leaders and sending them to labor camps on "suspicion of organizing and using a cult to undermine law enforcement," and restricting evangelism targeting college students, the secret document indicates.

In spite of the persecution, ChinaAid indicated the church is persevering.

"China's churches, especially house churches and church leaders, suffered greater pressure and persecution last year; they also demonstrated great endurance and perseverance," the report said. "In this police state where Domestic Security Protection agents run amuck, in a society suffering a serious loss of ethics and morals, and when spiritual pollution is worse than Beijing's

FastFacts

People's Republic of China

(not including Macau, Hong Kong or Taiwan)

Area

9,573,000 sq km

Population

1,330,584,783

Annual Growth

0.63%

Unreached, Unengaged
295 People Groups

Christians/Evangelicals

180,781,585

13.62% of population

- Capital: Beijing
- Largest religion: Nonreligious (atheism)
- Of the more than 100 million estimated believers, 2/3 gather in house churches

(Source: ChinaAid, International Mission Board and Operation World)

air pollution, only Christ's Church stands out like a lamp in the dark, preserving light, hope and peace like a light in the darkness."

Bob Fu, ChinaAid founder and president, added in the report that China's house churches "put their trust neither on potentates nor power, much less in man's wisdom and intellect."

"Rather, they trust in the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit and the truth of Jesus Christ," Fu said. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither persecution or freedom, nor poverty or wealth. In the coming year, China's churches will face new challenges, and they will continue to renew people's hearts, influence society and glorify the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

ChinaAid, based in Washington, is a Christian human rights organization committed to promoting religious freedom and the rule of law in China. (BP)

COMMENT

Adjusting to ‘Current Realities’

On Jan. 29, the state Baptist paper of General Association of Baptists in Virginia announced receipt of a \$1.5 million grant from the Texas-based Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation. The gift, which will be paid over four years, is the largest received by the *Religious Herald* in its 185-year history. In fact, the gift may be the largest ever received by any state Baptist paper.

In making the announcement Editor James White said, “The gift is a true answer to prayer and an indication that the Lord has much more for the *Herald* to accomplish as we adjust to new circumstances and current realities.”

Adjusting to new circumstances and current realities is a task faced by every state Baptist paper editor including this one. As churches increasingly emphasize ministries of the local congregation to the detriment of cooperative causes, missions giving through the Cooperative Program (CP) is not the only thing that falls. Circulation of the state Baptist paper declines and participation in Baptist life dwindles.

Such circumstances dramatically illustrate the need for the state Baptist paper. One pastor explained it by comparing an important role of the paper to the individual in an extended family who keeps up with everyone else, who always knows what everyone is doing.

Family members trust that one to report what a distant cousin in Chicago is doing or what some uncle living down the street is up to. Take away that family member and the family drifts apart.

In Baptist life, the state Baptist paper fills a similar role. It helps keep Baptists together by providing information, inspiration and interpretation of what Baptists are about.

A trusted voice

Political science expresses that truth in a slightly different way. The discipline teaches that volunteer groups, even Christian denominations, need a common base of trusted information in order to function effectively. That is the role of the state Baptist paper: a trusted voice; a welcomed friend.

Like the Virginia paper, *The Alabama Baptist* attempts to respond to “new circumstances and current realities” with exciting and innovative ideas. The print edition of *The Alabama Baptist* is commonly recognized as one of the leading publications in America. Four times in the last eight years, *The Alabama Baptist* has been judged the best regional Christian newspaper in the nation by Associated Church Press. The other four years the Alabama publication finished second. The Evangelical Press Association (EPA) has twice called *The Alabama Baptist* the best Christian newspaper in America and twice awarded the paper second place in that category.



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

The Religion Communicators Council has similarly feted the paper.

In 2009, *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) rolled out its Resource Center and Archives, a website housing every story published by the paper since 2000. There stories can be accessed by 50 different topics from most recent to oldest. Its value was not lost on the judges of EPA which gave the site first place among new websites that year.

In 2010, TAB introduced its e-edition. The “e” could stand for electronic since the edition is distributed over the internet or the “e” could stand for enhanced since the edition has features not available in the print version. Each week the e-edition features add-ons such as videos, audio interviews, slide shows and links to additional information about stories.

A special feature is the ability to update a story as news develops. This assures the latest news on important topics.

More recently the paper initiated a Breaking News website. (See alert.thealabamabaptist.com.) At least once each day, news from the world of religion is posted for all who subscribe to this free service. Through Tweets and Facebook postings, the paper attempts to interact with readers because the old adage “an informed Baptists is the best Baptist” is still true.

The new circumstances and current realities make the communications ministry ever more challenging. Five years ago a network of more than 100 correspondents helped provide news and information published in *The Alabama Baptist*. Today an ever-tightening budget reduced that network to a handful of correspondents. But still, 2012 marked the seventh-consecutive year that at least two news stories from every one of the 75 Baptist associations in the state were published in *The Alabama Baptist*.

With a reduced full-time staff the paper still devotes more than 70 percent of editorial space to original content and Alabama-related stories. In the first weeks of 2013 the paper provided an

in-depth look at Southern Baptist medical missions, a project done by the International Mission Board in cooperation with *The Alabama Baptist*. An examination of human trafficking provided an excellent resource for churches. “Sharing Jesus with Jews” looked at the latest trends in Jewish evangelism. Also, a five-part January Bible study series was only available in TAB.

All appeared first in TAB as original material and some were later distributed nationwide through Baptist Press news service.

The January–March edition of *Baptist World*, a publication of Baptist World Alliance, reprinted an editorial from *The Alabama Baptist* and reprint of another editorial is in the works. Several state papers reprinted TAB editorials during 2012, some more than once. This took the influence of *The Alabama Baptist* to leaders worldwide.

Providing this quality resource to Alabama Baptists is becoming more and more challeng-

ing with declining CP support and tightening church budgets. Thankfully, TAB has accumulated some reserves since its founding in 1843. Income from those reserves help keep the paper affordable for churches. But even that is not enough.

Like the *Religious Herald*, *The Alabama Baptist* needs the affirmation that “the Lord has much more for the paper to accomplish.” That affirmation

comes from prayer. It also comes from subscriptions. And like with the Virginia paper, it can come from significant financial gifts to help underwrite the work of Alabama Baptists’ state paper.

The opportunities are many — encouraging faithfulness to Baptist principles by endowing the editorship; assuring the quality of Baptist journalism by underwriting the executive editor position; financing an intern program to train God-called young people for the ministry of communications; providing subscription support for church plants. The list goes on.

170 years of partnership

The ministry of the state Baptist paper is vital to the welfare of Baptists in Alabama. The link between the two has been convincingly demonstrated through 170 years of partnership. If God places support of *The Alabama Baptist* through a financial gift on your heart, all of us connected with the ministry would be glad to work with you to accomplish your goals for the gift. Certainly, we will appreciate any support you can provide.

Please pray that God will raise up people who will join us in the conviction that “The Lord has much more for the paper to accomplish” and are willing to help make that happen.



"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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Photo by Doug Rogers

Gov. Robert Bentley addresses the nearly 450 people attending the Legislative Prayer Luncheon co-sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the governor's office Feb. 6 in Montgomery.

Legislative prayer

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

State political leaders challenged to follow 'greatest commandment'

Alabama's senators and representatives are settling back into the routine of Montgomery politics with the opening of the 2013 legislative session Feb. 5. They undoubtedly will be lobbied, urged and pressured to make decisions based on what this person or that business believes important.

The faith community is but one small voice among the choir and one that offers no glamorous reward for a legislator's support. But it is a voice that can continually remind those in political office of biblical standards.

One recent example came during the annual (and also final) Legislative Prayer Luncheon, co-sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the governor's office. More than 50 of the nearly 450 people attending the Feb. 6 event held at Embassy Suites in Montgomery were involved in state politics in some form. State leaders present included Gov. Robert Bentley, Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey, Attorney General Luther Strange, senators, representatives and members of the judicial branch.

Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, urged the leaders to remember the great commandment as outlined by Jesus in Luke 10 — "Love the Lord your God with all your heart ... (soul) ... strength ... mind ... and your neighbor as yourself."

"Could you do that?" Champion asked the leaders. "Could you make decisions and impact the generation that's following us by depending on Him?"

"You are making decisions that are going to affect generation after generation," he said. "Many of us love the state of Alabama and the people we are called to serve. What if we could operate as if we love the people we serve more than ourselves?"

Champion noted that God's Word says there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for others.

"You are called to lay down your life for the person across the aisle, the person you don't like, the person not like you," he said, asking state leaders to consider what their legacy might be.

"I don't have the ability (to lead First, Trussville) ... but if I love God with all my heart, soul, strength, mind and other people more than myself, then God has something He can work with," Champion said. "He has something He can bless."

"God bless you as you lead, as you make decisions," he said to the state leaders. "We are counting on you."

Bentley's remarks during the luncheon were brief and focused on a description of his Christian faith as well as thanking Alabama Baptists for their prayers.

"I want to do what I can to glorify Him," Bentley said.

He also acknowledged 2013 as being the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights movement in Alabama.

"We need to remember that we as public servants are here to serve all the people," he said.

"It doesn't matter what color you are, gender you are or politics you have. As Christians, we certainly need to always feel that way."

Other participants in the program included an Old Testament reading by Chip Starnes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, and a New Testament reading by Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea. Amy and Keith Hibbs, along with Jesse Conte, provided special music.

Joe Bob Mizzell, who organized the prayer luncheon for more than 20 years until his retirement last year attended this final event.

"I'm sad to see it go," he said.

But it comes down to finances, said Bobby Dubois, SBOM associate executive director.

"It has been a popular gathering through the years but due to rising costs and decreasing income, SBOM leadership has determined that the event cannot continue in the future," he said. "We regret this but remain committed to conducting ministry audits on all expenses and living within our income." ■



Photo by Doug Rogers

Buddy Champion, pastor of FBC Trussville, challenges state leaders to think of others more than themselves.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Bolin retires from Cullman's East Side Baptist

Since 1994, Richard O. Bolin has served East Side Baptist Church, Cullman, as associate pastor and worship minister, "impacting lives" and making a difference, according to Pastor Ken Allen.

Bolin, who retired from the ministry in December 2012, began serving as the worship leader at Bethel Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, while he was still in high school. He later served under Don Graham at Katherwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, while he was attending Samford University in Birmingham, and was licensed to the ministry at Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, Midfield.

Bolin later served as worship minister of First Baptist Church, Mount Olive; Wilkes Baptist Church, Midfield; and East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, before serving East Side Baptist.

East Side celebrated Bolin's retirement with a special service held at Cullman Regional Medical Center on Dec. 2. On Dec. 30, Bolin's last day in the ministerial role, East Side invited members and others who served with Bolin, including Graham, to gather and recognize Bolin for his 52 years of service.

"It was a real beautiful service," Bolin said.

Allen said, "Richard is one of those ministers ... that do not come along very often. He is a unique man of God who really loves the Lord. ... We were blessed to have him at (East Side) for a long time." In his retirement Bolin said he is "ready to fill in as needed" for churches and ministries that need assistance.

Bolin and his wife, Barbara, have two children and seven grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



BOLIN

Samford's Floyd honored with Marshall Award

Samford University professor H. Hugh Floyd received a top university award at the Birmingham university's 2013 spring semester opening convocation Jan. 29.

Floyd, sociology department chair since 1993, received the Jennings B. Marshall Service Award for significant and sustained service contributions to the university.



FLOYD

Samford Provost Brad Creed presented the award during the convocation program in Wright Center.

Creed cited Floyd for his dedicated efforts toward ensuring learning and freedom of inquiry in the classroom.

Floyd has worked on the Alabama Poverty Project and was involved in the grant proposal for the Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence.

"As a sociologist, he has spent a lifetime studying the way humans work together to achieve common goals," Creed said.

Floyd holds a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and a doctorate from the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga. (Samford)

Marler receives Samford's George Macon Award

Penny Long Marler has taught in Samford University's religion department since 1993 and was recently awarded the George Macon Memorial Award from the Birmingham university for outstanding performance as a teacher and counselor.

Samford Provost Brad Creed presented the award during the 2013 spring semester opening convocation Jan. 29 held in Wright Center.

Creed noted Marler's nationally known research on church attendance that has influenced both the sociological understanding of religion and policymaking in religious denominations.

Marler's strong mentoring relationships are a hallmark of her work, Creed said.

Marler holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University, master's and doctorate degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a master's degree in social work from the University of Louisville in Louisville, Ky. (Samford)



MARLER



NAMB photo

Leading Bible studies and teaching budgeting skills are all part of the ministry provided by Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans. Kay Bennett (center) directs the center and is a North American Mission Board Week of Prayer missionary.

Haven of

NAMB's Bennett helps change lives of women,

Several years ago, Melanie found herself in a desperate situation. Homeless and struggling with substance abuse, she was pregnant and sleeping under a bridge in Oklahoma City. Life seemed hopeless. A newspaper article caught her eye, emphasizing the city of New Orleans struggling to rebuild after Hurricane Katrina. Desperate to rebuild her life as well, Melanie set out for New Orleans and on the path to a divine appointment with LoveLoud missionary Kay Bennett.

"Melanie contacted me and came into our transitional housing program," Bennett explained. "She got a job, got into college and is working toward her social work degree now. She came to us because she knew she needed help, and we offered her the support she needed to succeed."

Melanie is just one of hundreds of women that Bennett is reaching through her ministry at Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans.

With a motto to "meet needs through love, action and truth," the Baptist Friendship House exists to serve and support vulnerable women and children as they transition into new lives. The ministry offers housing to homeless women and children as well as life-skill training in areas ranging from literacy and computer skills to GED and college preparation.

"Most of the women who come into our transitional program are getting out of a bad situation," Bennett said. "The important thing to realize is that these

women often get stuck in vicious cycles of addiction or abuse, and if there's not someone there to help them break the cycle they have a hard time breaking free. Through Baptist Friendship House I'm able to come alongside them and help them get out of the cycle for good."

In addition to the transitional housing program, Bennett and her team host numerous community outreach events throughout the year designed to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of their community.

At the crux of Bennett's ministry is a desire to reach the whole person, starting with their physical and emotional needs before ultimately seeking to see them spiritually transformed through the power of Christ.

"We see people that come to us with deep needs, and many have never even heard who Jesus is. If I walk up to that person and start just quoting Scriptures without offering to help with their immediate needs, they'll never hear it. When they come in and see us simply being Christ to them, that starts building a bridge to share the gospel and see life change happen."

Bennett has been reaching the hearts of New Orleans through Baptist Friendship House for the last 15 years. Originally from Mississippi, she came to the city more than two decades ago to complete her master of divinity degree at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

She served as a missionary at the Brantley Baptist Center for nine years before taking on her current role

"I have not had to worry about raising funds to support me while I do the ministry that God has called me to do, and this allows me to totally focus on His work."

Kay Bennett
North American Mission Board

"We see people that come to us with deep needs, and many have never even heard who Jesus is. If I walk up to that person and start just quoting Scriptures without offering to help with their immediate needs, they'll never hear it. When they come in and see us simply being Christ to them, that starts building a bridge to share the gospel and see life change happen."



Kay Bennett
North American Mission Board



NAMB photo

Kay Bennett (right) meets with a client at Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans. Bennett uses a diverse skill set to help meet the needs of clients and show them the love of Christ.

HOPE: Overcoming darkness in New Orleans

children at Baptist Friendship House in New Orleans

at Baptist Friendship House in 1997.

In her time of service, Bennett has developed a heart not just for the women and children of New Orleans but also for the city itself.

"New Orleans is such a laid back city with something for everyone," Bennett said. "If you've never fit in anywhere in your life, you would find a place to fit in New Orleans."

However, Bennett recognized that much of what the city is known for today are the things that give it a darker side.

"There is certainly a heavier side to the city. Things like strip clubs, alcoholism, prostitution, they mark our city as well."

Week of Prayer

The annual Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 3–10, and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, provide support for Bennett and other missionaries like her who serve on behalf of Southern

Baptists in North America.

With a goal of \$70 million, this year's offering theme is "Whatever It Takes — Reaching the One."

"For more than 20 years the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering has provided for my salary as a missionary here in New Orleans," Bennett said. "I have not had to worry about raising funds to support me while I do the ministry that God has called me to do, and this allows me to totally focus on His work."

Bennett is boldly ministering to the needs of those looking to be rescued from the darker side of the city.

Her latest challenge? Fighting the rapidly growing battle against human trafficking that is dominating the United States and, in particular, the city of New Orleans.

"Human trafficking is the largest criminal industry in the world and the second largest in the United States," Bennett said.

"In New Orleans, we have a lot of pros-

titution, a lot of clubs on Bourbon Street and we're located on I-10, the highest rated corridor for trafficking in the country. These things make it easy for vulnerable girls to be transported through the city and sold for sex."

A safe haven

Through her ministry at Baptist Friendship House, Bennett is able to provide an alternative to those vulnerable to trafficking as well as direct those already victimized to safe havens in the city.

"It is really easy for someone living in desperation to be lured into a trafficking situation and then held captive there. New Orleans is an attraction for runaways and runaways are attractive to traffickers. We are trying to intercept these vulnerable girls and bring them into our program before they get lost. If they've been trafficked and rescued, we're able to work with local law enforcement to get them into a safe house."

Though ministry like Bennett's can seem risky at times, she believes she is exactly where she is supposed to be: on the frontlines combatting the problems that plague the women and children in the darkness of New Orleans.

"In this work, I know I am in the center of God's will," Bennett said with assurance, "and there's no safer place to be."

For more information on Bennett, visit anniearmstrong.com/kaybennett. For more information about how you can get involved in reaching New Orleans with the gospel, visit namb.net/NewOrleans. (NAMB)

AAEO gifts increase in 2012

North American Mission Board (NAMB) President Kevin Ezell expressed gratitude to Southern Baptists whose giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) increased 1.9 percent in 2012.

The gain, Ezell said during NAMB's trustees' Feb. 5–6 meeting in San Diego, will translate into greater effectiveness in reaching North America for Christ.

The offering totaled \$57.2 million in 2012 — the second year in a row for an increase.

"It's a humbling thing every day that we get to do what we do because of the sacrificial giving of Southern Baptists," Ezell said. "Their heart for missions is unmatched."

The trustee meeting took place in San Diego to spend time with NAMB church planting missionaries and see their work firsthand during a tour the day before their business sessions. San Diego is one of 30 cities in NAMB's Send North America strategy to connect established churches with church plants.

Also during the meeting, Carlos Ferrer, NAMB's chief financial officer and vice president of mission support, reported to trustees that NAMB is in the "strongest position financially" as it has been in his 20 years of service. (BP)



North American Missions

**WHATEVER
IT TAKES
REACHING THE ONE**

Alabama goal: \$6,100,000
National goal: \$70,000,000

AnnieArmstrong.com

Across Alabama's Associations

BIBB

► More than 300 people attended the 7th annual Wild Game Dinner at **Centreville Church** on Feb. 2. Jim Hammond spoke, and Pastor Ken Fuller and Chuck Oliver, minister of education, presided over the dinner and introduced the speaker. Fuller gave an invitation at the conclusion of the meeting for anyone who wanted to accept Christ.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Hoover**, will host a gospel concert and community indoor picnic March 10. The picnic will be at 5 p.m. and the concert with Danny Funderburk will be at 6 p.m. For information call 205-823-3472. Randy Atkinson is pastor. ► **Rod Marshall**, president/CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, will speak at Tuesday Morning Missions of **McElwain Church, Birmingham**, on March 5, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. R. Joseph "Joby" Tricquet Jr. is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Thomasville Church** will hold its annual Beast Feast wild game supper Feb. 23, 5 p.m. Author Mark Cahill will speak and The Mount Gilead Quartet of Dothan will provide music. For

information call the church office at 334-636-4409. Ty Parten is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Mount Pleasant Church, Enterprise; New Home Church, Enterprise; Union Grove Church, Chancellor; and Goodman Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival Feb. 17-20 at Mount Pleasant Church. The Sunday service will be at 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday services at 7 p.m. Everyone is invited. For information call 334-347-1305. Steve Bruce is pastor of Mount Pleasant.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold revival March 3-6. Service times will be March 3, 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and March 4-6, 6:30 p.m. Bob Pitman will speak. For information call 256-729-1328. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MADISON

► **CrossPointe Church, Madison**, will hold its third annual Missions Conference Feb. 27-March 3. More than 20 local, regional and global missionaries and missions organizations will be represented during the conference. The kick-off service will be Feb. 27, 6 p.m. The Missions Conference Night

of Worship will be March 1, 6 p.m. with guest speaker Jason Dees, pastor of Valleydale Church, Birmingham. March 2 will be a community day of service and the March 3 services will be 9 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. For information call the church office at 256-772-4463. John Dees is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Dan Taylor** is the new pastoral care minister at **Dauphin Way Church, Mobile**. He will serve alongside Bill Whitfield, minister to pastoral care. Taylor previously served as minister of education at churches in Alabama, Texas and Florida. He holds a bachelor of science degree in health and physical education from the University of Texas in Austin, Texas; master of religious education from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and a doctorate in education from Texas A&M University-Commerce in Commerce, Texas. He and his wife, Priscilla, have two children and five grandchildren.

OTHER

► **Victory Church, Millbrook**, West Campus, will hold a Saturday night singing with The Anchormen on Feb. 16, 7 p.m. Steve Sanders is pastor.

Proposed state lottery back on the table, being tied to school security, scholarships

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

It's a victory well over a decade old, but it's one Alabama Baptists still high-five over when the topic surfaces.

The faith voice was certainly the underdog and predicted to lose, but when the votes were counted in 1999 then-Gov. Don Siegelman's proposed lottery went down in defeat — a shock that still resonates strong emotions on both sides.

The battle in the state soon moved to electronic bingo gambling, climaxing and coming to a near halt in 2009-2010. A major court case in 2012 promised to change the face of gambling efforts in the state forever, but the defendants not pleading guilty all walked free.

And for a while, the attempts to legalize gambling in the state were quiet. Until now.

Milton McGregor reignited the electronic bingo gambling debate in December 2012 by reopening his closed-down casino.

At press time the casino remained open despite the fact the law does not allow for slot machines parading as electronic bingo machines.

But McGregor's stand may be muffled, even snuffed out, if the state House of Representatives moves forward with legislation being proposed for a state lottery.

The lottery is being attached to school security and education enhancement, according to House Minority Leader Craig Ford, D-Gadsden.

'Latest hot button topic'

The *Birmingham News* reported Ford as saying the first \$25 million of the estimated \$250 million raised annually would go toward funding a school resource officer in every public school. The remaining \$225 million would buy classroom supplies and provide college scholarships for A-B students, according to the *News* article quoting Ford.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said, "This is just the latest hot button topic those promoting gambling in the state are using to sell it to the citizens of Alabama."

"Gambling proponents continue to make claims that they can never meet," he said, noting the decision in the 1980s to approve dog racing in the state.

The citizens of Birmingham

were told that the city's schools would never want for money if they would vote in favor of building the Birmingham Race Course and expanding gambling, Godfrey said.

"How did that promise work out?" he asked.

"It's not a new technique to tie an attempt to expand gambling to something the people are concerned about, but this is not the answer," he said.

"It is not right for the state to fund projects or make a profit on the backs of those who are the least among us. And it will be the poor who put the most money into a lottery."

Alabama is one of only seven states left in the United States without some form of lottery. The other states with no form of lottery are Mississippi, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Alaska and Hawaii.

The Legislature convened for the 2013 session Feb. 5.

The *Alabama Baptist* will follow the lottery legislation as well as other important bills throughout the session. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and at alert.thealabamabaptist.com for breaking news items.



Bessemer's Concord Baptist celebrates 125 years

It was a time to remember the past, celebrate the present and look forward to the future. And that is exactly what Concord Baptist Church, Bessemer, did as it commemorated its 125th anniversary during three consecutive Sunday services.

On Nov. 4, 2012, the church celebrated the past with Shelby Smith, a retired Baptist representative who grew up in the Bessemer Baptist Association church.

Smith spoke about Concord Baptist as it was and shared about his calling into missions through the church. "That was a real good way to ... celebrate the past," Pastor Matt McGukin said.

Jamey Pruett, a former pastor of Concord who now serves as pastor of Gilliam Springs Baptist Church, Arab, shared Nov. 11 and spoke on celebrating the present. After that service, the entire congregation moved outside for a churchwide photo.

Then on Nov. 18, McGukin shared a sermon on looking forward to the future, and Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Bobby Joe Seales presented a commemorative plaque to the church. Following the service everyone enjoyed dinner in the church fellowship hall.

According to McGukin, the vision for Concord is the Great Commission. He noted the church is involved in missions projects in the state and also has adopted a village in Peru to "help see a church planted there."

He added one of the most memorable highlights of the anniversary was the opportunity to see the history of 125 years and to recognize the faith of so many in the past who have laid an "excellent foundation."

"We're blessed to be a small part of what God is doing," he said. (Julie Payne)

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Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

If you have a large debt on your property or if you've been thinking about getting a lump sum payment and you are at least 62 years old, please PAY ATTENTION. FHA is about to pull the fixed rate standard reverse mortgage off the shelf. This is the reverse mortgage that currently gives more money to the homeowner.

If you need this product then you have about a month to get things lined up so I can get your FHA case number prior to April 1. If you do not have your case number before then and if we cannot close your loan before July 1, then we will have missed the deadline.

In order to get an FHA case number, I need a completed application and you will need to have a certificate from a HUD approved reverse mortgage counselor. These two things take time, so if you wait until the last week

or two of March to contact me, you may have missed the boat.

This is no scare tactic. If you'd like to see the letter we received from FHA, I'll be glad to send you a copy, or you can find it by contacting HUD or FHA directly.

This product will be replaced by the fixed rate saver. On a median-priced home, this product will approximately pay \$10,000-20,000 less. The variable rate standard will still be around, but it currently pays out less because it has an origination fee and does not have any lender credits.

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



Jimmy Dixon



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Someone You Should Know

By Julie Payne, The Alabama Baptist

Lynda Kerr Boswell

Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery
Montgomery Baptist Association

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE: Philippians 4:13

FAVORITE HYMN: "Victory in Jesus"

HOBBIES: Crocheting, candy-making, quilting and volunteering at Forest Park Ministry Center

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 22 years of marriage to William; two sons, Timmy and Will



BOSWELL

Lynda Kerr Boswell is one of the volunteers who reads articles from The Alabama Baptist newspaper for a tape ministry at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in Montgomery. The ministry serves those dependent on sound for communication, and Boswell has participated in this ministry work for 15 years.

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: My parents, K. Howard and Mary Y. Kerr. My dad was a pastor at four churches over the years and was a minister for 62 years. My mother was the church organist.

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

A: One of the ladies from Heritage [Baptist] was (part of the) reading (ministry) at the time and I told her I was interested and to let me know when they needed another reader. My husband was legally blind and didn't like me reading to him except for the SEC scores, which I thought were boring. He told me I should volunteer somewhere reading to the blind. This volunteer position came about after he died. He would be happy to know that I am doing something he suggested and that makes me very happy.

Q: What do you get from this ministry work?

A: I am so blessed that I can share with others something I love doing which is reading. It is like I have a connection to these people and I am glad that I can get information out.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in this ministry work in the future?

A: This makes me so happy and I can't see myself in the future not being able to do it. ... So I will continue as long as I have the strength and capability.

Like FATHER like SON

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist duos serve together, note 'plentiful' benefits

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to go to work with your parents or follow your father's footsteps into the family business? Or what about a total reversal where father and son switch roles?

While these scenarios are somewhat of a rarity in the ministry, there are several known father-son connections in Alabama Baptist life, and the blessings and benefits of these familial connections can be plentiful.

Take Pastor Rob Jackson, for example. His late father, Bob Jackson, had previously served Buck Run Baptist Church in Kentucky and was called again as pastor there in 1990. Experiencing a staff shortage at the time, the church then invited Rob Jackson to join them as associate pastor. The father and son served eight years together, but that would not be the only such experience.

A few years ago Central Baptist Church, Decatur, where Rob Jackson serves as pastor, was preparing to move and needed an associate pastor with relocation experience. A search committee member eventually asked about Bob Jackson, and he accepted the position.

"Dad was more than just a mentor, more than just my dad," Rob Jackson said of how they supported each other in ministry. "Dad was my best friend."

Before Bob Jackson passed away in 2012, the father and son had worked side by side in ministry a total of 13 years — and they worked together like "hand in glove," Rob Jackson said. "It was a perfect fit."

Rob Jackson learned a lot from all those years spent by his father's side in ministry. He said his father was someone who truly loved God with all his heart and loved people, and he added that growing up and seeing his father the same behind closed doors as he was in front of others was one of the blessings of their shared ministry call.

Another father-son duo, Vince and Mark Whittington, share approximately 25 years of a mutual ministry call.

Family setting

Vince Whittington, interim pastor of White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City, had a business career before entering the ministry. Saved at 29 years old, it was not long after that he felt the call into ministry and eventually served as pastor of several Alabama Baptist churches.

His son, Mark Whittington, pastor of First Baptist Church, Uria, sensed a call into ministry in high school.

Mark Whittington's upbringing was one marked by "a strong Christian emphasis in our home," he said, adding that his dad was very instrumental in the family setting



LEFT: K.J. Pugh (right) serves with his father, Keith Pugh, at Open Door Baptist, Tuscaloosa. **RIGHT:** Vince Whittington (left) and his son, Mark Whittington, currently serve at churches about four and a half hours away from each other.



Photos courtesy of Pughs and Whittingtons

of being a godly husband and father.

Mark Whittington attributes much of how he approaches ministry to his father's pastoral nature. "A lot of my greatest joy is the pastoral side of ministry, and I feel like I got a lot of that from him," he said. "His personality is very people-oriented. He's very much a giver of grace."

The father and son serve churches on virtually opposite ends of the state, but the physical distance doesn't prevent them

from gleaning valuable wisdom from one another and sharing ministry materials. "If I discover something meaningful in my walk with the Lord ... I'll share something with him," Vince Whittington noted.

While one may assume wisdom and influence naturally flow from the senior down to the junior, that isn't always the case, said Vince Whittington. He acknowledged his son has been a "strength" for him, in part due to his age and as a person in tune with the younger generations.

"I'm just thrilled God has allowed me to have a son in ministry," he said. "To have your children involved in ministry — I think there's nothing like that."

Keith Pugh, pastor of Open Door Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, also is thankful for this season of life serving in ministry with his son, K.J. Pugh.

Along with a mutual ministry calling, the father and son also share the place in which they minister — K.J. Pugh is the associate pastor of education and missions at Open Door Baptist.

"It is a great blessing to see him every day at the office," Keith Pugh said, noting several ways he and his son support each other in ministry. "We pray for each other and try to encourage each other by our heart for ministry. He comes to me for guidance and ... I am quick to bounce things off him as well."

K.J. Pugh, who, like Mark Whittington, sensed a call into vocational ministry

while in high school, said his father encouraged him through that experience but by and large let him work through it on his own.

"We prayed and talked together as a family but it was the Lord who had His hand on K.J. and that was very evident," Keith Pugh added. "I never tried to influence him to go into ministry but when God called him, I have tried to encourage him."

Mark Whittington had a similar experience during his own ministry call in 1987. He recalled how his father remained by his side during that time yet never dictated the decisions he should make.

When supporting each other in ministry work, K.J. Pugh said he and his father have different gifts and excel in different aspects of ministry. "For the most part we complement one another, so that we are stronger together than we are apart."

One element of ministry Keith Pugh noted in his son is his teaching ability. "[K.J.] writes all of our Sunday School material for our adult Sunday School classes," he said. "He is a great resource for any questions about Scripture or church history. His knowledge really amazes me at times."

Ministry guidance

K.J. Pugh said he has received ministry guidance and encouragement from his father not only in word but also in how his father has modeled how to act and minister to others. "I have learned from my father to invest time in people," he said. "Every touch made upon a life will have ripple effects in eternity."

He added that one of the "unforeseen benefits" of fathers and sons serving together is the relational freedom. "We can speak freely with one another because we know love and respect will always be there," he said.

And the opportunity to have a wise, live resource in ministry only a phone call away is special for Mark Whittington. "Probably one of the greatest blessings of having a father in ministry is ... that open access," he said.

Alabama Baptist pastors serve as volunteer chaplains in time of crises

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A growing number of pastors are serving their communities through volunteer chaplaincy ministries.

Steve Johnson serves as pastor of Union Springs Baptist Church, Randolph, in Chilton Baptist Association and also is one of the volunteer chaplains for the Chilton County Sheriff's Office.

In the first 18 months of the chaplaincy program, Johnson has been on death calls and ride-alongs with deputies, counseled family members involved in crises, taken part in hostage situations and made personal ministry contacts to employees in the sheriff's department.

"You can be blown away by what you see," Johnson said.

When the need arises, the sheriff's office dispatcher makes contact with a volunteer chaplain like Johnson, who has his own two-way radio, carries a cell phone and wears a pager. On the scene he also wears a badge that identifies him as a chaplain for the sheriff's office.

Erric Price, the Chilton County Sheriff's Office lead investigator and liaison for the volunteer chaplains, praised the chaplaincy program and called Johnson "a God-send for us."

Lynn Hughston, pastor of Bates Chapel Baptist Church, Centre, in Cherokee Baptist Association volunteers as a hospital chaplain to serve his community, as he has done the last 11 years for the Cherokee Medical Center.

Hughston is on call for a week at a time on a rotating schedule with 8-10 other volunteer chaplains.

"I find serving as a volunteer chaplain is fulfilling," he said. "It gives me an opportunity to help people in some small way at a critical time in their lives."

When a Crossville volunteer firefighter died in the line of duty in 2009, the fire department's sergeant recognized the need for chaplaincy ministry and invited Zach Richards to fill the role of volunteer chaplain for the Crossville Fire Department. Richards is pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church, Crossville, in DeKalb Baptist Association.

"When I arrive on the scene I check with those in command, find out who has been involved, help calm people down and assist firefighters with the stress of their jobs," he said.

Richards understands the importance of his volunteer chaplaincy ministry. "Emergency workers tend to be neglected until someone has a fire," he said. "These workers

make personal sacrifices and endure time away from their families. Our Crossville firefighters know I love them, pray for them and that I am there for them."

Bill Stephens, who recently retired as pastor of Vernant Baptist Church, Magnolia Springs, in Baldwin Baptist Association received his credentials as an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain in 2005 and has been deployed numerous times since then.

He also is serving as a volunteer chaplain for Marketplace Ministries, a chaplain ministry to businesses. He ministers to employees at a Mobile crane company and a hotel in Pensacola, Fla., as well as to long distance drivers with a Mobile trucking company.

Stephens also takes great pride in serving as a volunteer chaplain for the Mobile post of the Alabama State Troopers since 2007.

But that's not all. Since 1982, Stephens has been serving as a volunteer hospital chaplain for four hospitals in Foley, Fairhope, Mobile and Pensacola, Fla.

Richards believes that pastors interested in volunteer chaplain ministry should first pray for God's leadership. "As a pastor you must have an understanding congregation that is willing to allow you to

focus your efforts on people other than those in your church," he said.

Price encourages pastors who have an interest in volunteer chaplaincy to talk with officials at their local police and sheriff's departments, noting that city and county fire department chaplaincy is a needed area of ministry.

Johnson warned, "Not all chaplains are cut out to be preachers, and not all preachers are cut out to be chaplains," while Stephens said that those who do choose to serve will broaden the horizons of their pastoral ministry.

Chaplaincy credentials and training are essential for serving as a volunteer chaplain. Johnson obtained his chaplaincy certification through the International Conference of Police Chaplains and was also credentialed as an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain.

Hughston received his hospital chaplain credentials from training sessions through the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a patient privacy emphasis created by the U.S. Congress in 1996.

Richards was credentialed as an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain, endorsed as a chaplain by the North American Mission Board and received additional chaplaincy training through the Alabama Fire College.

Information about Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplaincy training can be obtained through the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief website, www.sldr.org.

in Loving Memory of Alabama Baptist leaders

Stevie Russell Tierce Pilgrim Rest's pastor Tierce dies at 59

Stevie Russell Tierce had a "genuine heart" and was "very compassionate," said Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Baptist Association. Tierce, who was a second-generation pastor of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Centre, passed away Feb. 1. He was 59.

Pilgrim Rest Baptist was destroyed by an April 11, 2011, tornado. A few months later on July 3, 2011, Tierce was severely injured in an automobile accident.

Tierce's wife, Patty, said the outpouring of love from the community and church family has been "amazing" during the difficult time of recovery and in her husband's passing.

Tierce, who attended classes at Howard College (now Samford University) extension center in Centre, felt called into the ministry in 1975. Years later he served as a bivocational pastor of Pilgrim Rest for nearly eight years while working for the Polk County Public Works in Cedartown, Ga.

He was a lifelong member of Weiss Lake Antique Power Association and served as the tractor club's chaplain for three years. He also was a member of Mount Signal Masonic Lodge in Piedmont.

He is survived by his wife, Patty, three children and four grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)



TIERCE

Richard L. Sharp Retired Alabama pastor Sharp dies at 87

Richard L. Sharp, a native of Decatur, spent more than 50 years serving Alabama Baptist churches. He passed away Jan. 16 at the age of 87.

Sharp felt called into the ministry while he and his wife, Lorene, were members at First Baptist Church, Anniston.

He received his bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and began to serve as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Columbiana. He also served Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton; South Highlands Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa; Grandview Baptist Church, Dothan; Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point; Westmeade Baptist Church, Decatur; and Selma Baptist Church, Dothan, before retiring. He later began serving as an interim pastor at Pleasant Plains Baptist Church, Columbia, but ended up serving the church as pastor for 17 years before retiring again in 2004.

Sharp is preceded in death by his wife, Lorene. He is survived by three children, 11 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)

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Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

Samford's School of Arts receives \$300,000 grant

A three-year, \$300,000 grant from the Christ Is Our Salvation (CIOS) Foundation of Waco, Texas, will support a new Center for Worship and the Arts in Samford University's School of the Arts.

According to the CIOS mission statement, "educational institutions that receive distributions from the trust should provide a top-quality education to prepare students for service in their chosen vocation, while at the same time providing significant opportunities for students to grow in their Christian faith."

'Generous grant'

School of the Arts Dean Joseph Hopkins said, "This tremendously generous grant from the CIOS Foundation matches the strengths of Samford music and worship with the needs of the local church."

"It helps us pair the mentorship of experienced worship leaders

with those sensing a call; and it makes Samford a place for serious conversations about how we may all work together to enrich the worship of the church."

The center will be indirectly related to Samford's music and worship degree and the minor in worship leadership, created in 2011 and led by faculty member Eric Mathis. Mathis, who also is preparing the strategic plan for the new center, noted that while those existing programs are strongly focused on music, the new center will incorporate all areas of the arts.

Mathis said that as the "language" of worship expands, "worship leaders need to be defined by interdisciplinary studies in worship, preaching, music, theatre, dance, visual art, architecture and film." Like the worship leadership program, the center will involve university divisions outside the School of the Arts, including How-

ard College of Arts and Sciences, Beeson Divinity School and Student Ministries.

'Serve congregations'

"The primary responsibility of the center will be to serve congregations, ministers and thoughtful lay people in the church interested in exploring the relationship between worship and the arts," Mathis said. "We hope to create a diverse and hospitable environment where individuals and communities of faith can explore the depths of Christian worship, the bounty of artistic expression, and with the disciplined and pur-

poseful integration of the two."

Mathis said helping teens explore calling to worship leadership is expected to be a significant focus of the center, as will the production of online resources in worship and the arts for ministers and congregations.

Hopkins said further details of the planned use of the CIOS grant will be announced this spring.

The new grant is not the first for Samford from CIOS. The foundation provided major funding to launch Samford's Children's Learning Center in 1998. (Samford)



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CHURCH POSITIONS

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER: Northwood Hills Baptist Church in Northport is seeking to hire a paid contemporary worship leader for a new service that will launch on Easter Sunday. We are launching a new work to reach the lost and unchurched young families, singles and others in our area. For information, please call or email the pastor, Rusty Selman, at 205-339-3196 or rusty@northwoodhillschurch.com.

MUSIC DIRECTOR/WORSHIP PASTOR: FBC Helena is seeking someone with a passion for Christ, His church and the ministry of worship. Must have some education and experience. We are a growing church with a diverse congregation. Send resumes to: glwalker20@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER: Center Grove Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking God's man to lead our choir and congregation in blended worship services. Email resumes to: peejinx@bellsouth.net, or mail to: Worship Search Team, 4607 Co. Rd. 1545, Cullman, AL 35058.

BIVOCATIONAL (PART-TIME) WORSHIP LEADER: Shiloh Baptist Church of Hartford, Ala., is seeking a bivocational (part-time) worship leader. If interested, please submit resumes by mail to: Worship Leader Search Committee, Shiloh Baptist Church, 873 N Shiloh Road, Hartford, AL 36344.

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 resume to: Rangeline Baptist Church, ATTN: Music Committee, 5809 County Road 19, Linden, AL 36748.

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

FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: FBC Enterprise in Enterprise, Ala., is prayerfully receiving resumes until Feb. 28. Please send to: fbcenterprise@hotmail.com, ATTN: Personnel Committee Chair.

YOUTH MINISTER: Central Heights Baptist, near Florence, Ala., is seeking a youth minister for grades 7-12. Please mail resume to: randall.huckaba.ctr@mda.mil or huckabar@saic.com. Mail: 10090 County Road 15, Florence, AL 35633, ATTN: Randy Huckaba.

CHILDREN'S PASTOR/CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR: Concord Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C., is seeking a children's pastor/children's ministry director. This person will develop and lead a comprehensive ministry to children, preschool-fifth grade. The candidate should have a minimum of three years church/children's ministry experience. Preferred candidates should hold a degree from an accredited seminary. Interested persons may submit resumes via email to: jjames@concordbaptist.com, or by regular mail to: Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621. ATTN: Dr. Don Cox.

CHILDREN'S PASTOR/DIRECTOR: Vibrant, growing church seeking pastor/director to lead children's ministry (K-5th grade) to a new level. Must have college degree and minimum of 5 years in children's ministry experience. Send resume to: Search Committee, Silverdale Baptist Church, 7236 Bonny Oaks Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37421, or info@silverdalebc.com.

TWO POSITIONS AVAILABLE: Dwight Baptist in Gadsden is prayerfully receiving resumes for two vital ministries. Please send to: jaystewart@comcast.net or call 256-546-2847 for more information.

OTHER POSITIONS

PART-TIME SECRETARY: Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Ohatchee, Ala., is searching for a part-time secretary (M-F; 8 a.m.-noon). Applicants must be an active member of a Southern Baptist church. If interested, email oakbowerybaptist@att.net to request an application.

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

Baptist Association, 1331 Fairfax Avenue, Bessemer, AL 35020, or admin@bessemerbaptist.org.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Mike Goforth
Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz

Recently I was in the country of Romania on a missions trip. I was preaching about salvation being a free gift of eternal life. There were two young boys sitting on the front pew of the church. I held up a dollar and asked one of the young boys if he wanted it. He shook his head yes. I asked him if he believed I would give it to him and he shook his head no. I held it out to him and said come and get it and you can have it. He shook his head no again and would not come. I asked the other boy if he wanted it and he said yes. I said come and get it and he did. After the service I asked the first young boy why he didn't come and get the dollar and he said, "I was afraid you wouldn't give it to me and everyone would laugh."

Salvation is a free gift from God. The Holy Spirit convicts us that we are sinners and then offers us a free gift of salvation if we will just receive it. This free gift is obtained by inviting Jesus into our lives. So many people don't accept this free gift because they are afraid God wouldn't really give salvation to them.

On this same trip to Romania I had chartered a bus for our missions team. Our bus driver was a man named Romero. He did not speak English. I preached in a church one night through an interpreter. Romero was sitting on the back row of the church. I spoke about asking for forgiveness of sin and inviting Jesus in your heart and being able to go to heaven. I gave an invitation asking people to pray and invite Jesus into their hearts. I led them in the sinner's prayer. After the service I got on the bus and the bus driver grabbed me and hugged my neck. He pointed to his heart and then pointed toward heaven. I asked him what had happened to him and he said he invited Jesus into his heart and received God's salvation for his life.

We are guilty of making salvation hard. Jesus said getting saved is like taking a drink of water, like eating a piece of bread, like walking through a door. We have a great message to share to a world that needs to hear. Come to Jesus and receive this free gift of salvation. 🙏

Editor's Note

The Jan. 24 focus on “Sharing Jesus with Jews” included articles titled

- ▶ “Fears, misunderstandings ‘paralyze’ Christians, keep them from sharing with Jews”
- ▶ “Tips for sharing with Jews”
- ▶ “Messianic leader offers training, help for churches”
- ▶ “Messianic Jews find returning to Israel to be major legal battle.”

Larry Brook, editor of *Southern Jewish Life Magazine*, responds to the articles here.

Judaism & Christianity

Southern Jewish Life Magazine's Brook responds to TAB articles on Judaism

It's Southern clockwork: Every few years there is measurable snow in the Deep South. Every few years, a hurricane hits somewhere along the Gulf Coast. And every few years, some of our Baptist neighbors make a big deal of trying to convert us.

The latest manifestation came in the Jan. 24 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, which had a cover story, “Sharing Jesus with Jews.” Much of the feature interviews an “Alabamian who serves as a Christian worker among the Jews,” who gives his view of how best to reach us.

He speaks at length about the messianic movement, and the piece notes two Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowships, in Bessemer and Tarrant. In the article, his name was changed “for security reasons.”

The piece lists Jewish populations in Alabama not only by county but by denomination.

One sidebar starts, “Jews in Alabama and the rest of the United States haven't heard the gospel enough, and that's because sharing with them is hard,” because we don't see the gospels as divine. That shouldn't be any more of a surprise than the Baptist rejection of the Book of Mormon or the Koran.

Haven't heard the gospel enough? Anyone who thinks Jews in the Deep South are unfamiliar with the story of Jesus is clearly out of touch.

One way to supposedly appeal to us is to point out the Jewishness of Jesus and the apostles, appealing to our sense of mishpocha (family) since the Holocaust supposedly made us so distrustful of outsiders. Again, we know full well that Jesus and his early followers were Jews, but that doesn't make him the Jewish messiah, any more than Bar Kochba, Shabbatei Zevi or Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who also claimed or were believed to be the messiah and were all Jews.

Messianic movement

In a particularly chutzpadik statement, the piece claims Jews must see belief in Jesus as acceptable in Judaism. To that end, it states groups like the messianic movement are becoming more accepted in the Jewish community — but that ignores reality. No Jewish community lists messianic groups as part of the community resources, nobody who professes belief in Jesus as divine counts toward a Jewish prayer quorum. It's up to us, not the Christian world, to define who is a Jew and what is Judaism. With almost 2,000 years of precedent, we've made our view on the subject clear.

How can there be Jewish atheists and not Jewish believers in Jesus, the piece wonders. Simple — an atheist is regarded as struggling over or questioning the exis-

tence of God (which is acceptable in Judaism) but has not left the Jewish people. The believer in Jesus has adopted a separate belief system that is foreign to Judaism.

There is a fallacy that the only difference between Judaism and Christianity is over whether Jesus was messiah. Judaism does not allow for belief in a human being as God, or that God can be divided into parts. Jews have a direct relationship with God and are not to separate ourselves from God by putting an intermediary in between.

We do not hold that people are born sinners because of Original Sin, which is a cornerstone in Christianity of why man needs Jesus to intercede on our behalf. While there is a sacrificial system in ancient Judaism, a blood sacrifice has never been a requirement for forgiveness. Good and evil both were created by God; there isn't a cosmic battle of God versus a different, evil entity — in Judaism, the rarely mentioned figure of Satan is subject to limitations God imposes.

The article is critical of the notion that Jews still have a special relationship with God and need not be saved through faith in Jesus, but that is precisely the direction where more Christians are going today.

A decade ago, Southside Baptist Church in Birmingham opened its doors to Temple Emanu-El for over a year while Emanu-El's sanctuary was being reno-

vated. Rev. Steve Jones caught a lot of flack from colleagues, who were astonished he wasn't using the opportunity of having so many Jews in his building as a chance to spread the gospel.

John Hagee, who founded Christians United for Israel, has said it is “fruitless” to target Jews for evangelism. While he does not go out looking to convert Jews, he states that if a Jew were to walk into his church and inquire about Christianity, he would certainly answer — which is to be expected, and nobody should argue with that.

Many on the Christian Right now say that it is up to God, not them, to “turn the heart” of Jews and others toward Jesus, and the best witness is simply to set a good example.

Hagee has said that if he were walking in Jerusalem

with an Orthodox rabbi and the messiah walked up the street, he knows one of them would have to make a radical theological transformation — but until then, we should work together on where we agree.

The article quotes a messianic lawyer in Jerusalem who bristles at the criticism that missionizing to Jews is a spiritual Holocaust. One must be careful to invoke Holocaust metaphors, but the end goal is the same — no more Jews. Of course, the missionaries are coming from what they consider extreme benevolence, since they are trying to share the ultimate truth and provide eternal salvation, not commit genocide. They say it is anti-Semitism not to try and reach Jews with the gospel, and their faith requires sharing the good news.

From our perspective, saying our faith, our very core of being, is deficient and needs to be replaced isn't exactly being respectful. These same missionaries would have choice words for any Muslim who made a similar effort toward them.

Redefining faith

Trying to reach us through redefining our faith and replacing it with a form of Christianity that wears a yarmulke and sprinkles in Hebrew words is identity theft. (Ironically, Birmingham's messianic congregation is holding a program on identity theft in April. Insert your punch line here.)

It is that hubris of having the only truth and believing that everyone else must accept that truth, which led to centuries of persecution. Not far down the slippery slope was the rationalization that a few hours of torture in this lifetime is worth it to convince someone away from eternal torment in the next life.

But even with all the bluster, one fact remains: There are few Jews who formally convert to Christianity. A far greater drain on Jewish numbers is apathy and assimilation into nothingness.

So in a sense, stories like this one in *The Alabama Baptist* are a blessing in disguise — they remind us that we are different, they force us to pay attention to who we are and why.

In that respect, thank you, *Alabama Baptist*, but we're happy with who we are and our relationship with God, just as you are happy with your relationship. I'm sure you'll be checking back with us again in a few years, though. 🕊



By Larry Brook
Editor, Southern Jewish Life Magazine

“So in a sense, stories like this one in *The Alabama Baptist* are a blessing in disguise — they remind us that we are different, they force us to pay attention to who we are and why.”

Changing lives

Will Drake
University of Mobile

UMobile RamCorps, Welsh Revival minister in Jamaica

University of Mobile's RamCorps and Welsh Revival instrumental ensembles experienced the beginning of a new year in a new world recently.

RamCorps, led by Kenn

Hughes, and Welsh Revival, directed by Steve Dunn, traveled to Jamaica during the New Year holiday to share the love of Christ through music with the people of Jamaica.

RamCorps has a tradition of serving others and its trip to

Jamaica was no different. The group had been praying together weekly about the experience since last August.

Although it led the local Jamaican church in music-based worship, RamCorps and Welsh Revival also encouraged Jamaicans to participate and played alongside an area youth band.

Students also built relationships with the citizens by dancing and singing with them as well as offering to show them how the various instruments worked.

RamCorps accomplished a goal of working as a team, a mentality which is reflected in the way RamCorps operates, as explained by Hughes, who also directs instrumental studies and Jazz Band at UMobile.

"Our purpose was to glorify God ... and (to) invest in the lives of Jamaicans in Montego Bay," Hughes said. "Eight Jamaicans that we know of prayed to receive Christ."

But the trip also affected the spiritual lives of the RamCorps members.

In fact, many of the students



Photo by Harrison Hughes

RamCorps leads a parade through a Jamaican neighborhood.

chose to be rebaptized as a sign of a rededication to the purpose that God has for their lives.

Loni Taylor, freshman music education major from Jacksonville, Fla., said, "I waded into the water and got baptized again as a declaration to the Lord that I surrender to Him. God didn't work on us just as individuals, but as a community."

'God's presence'

Leslie Ann Godwin, junior music education and vocal performance major from Pensacola, Fla., described her sense of God's presence as "overwhelming."

"My goals for the trip were to draw nearer to God and to serve," she said. "Not only in the music and taking it to a foreign country, but also in serving others and investing in the lives of the people there."

While students prepared to invest in the lives of people through their performances, some were shocked to learn they would also

leave a physical impact behind. The students mixed and poured concrete, painted and cleaned the local church, re-establishing a place for worship.

"I did not expect any physical work to be involved. I thought it was going to be just performances," said David Haney, sophomore sociology major from Semmes.

But the main element the students wanted to leave behind was a witness for Christ.

"The City of Montego Bay and the surrounding areas are hungry for something that will last, something eternal," said RamCorps trumpeter Ben Stith, junior math major from Birmingham. "The area is desperate for people to take a stand for honesty, integrity, love and Christ."

RamCorps member Jayme Snellgrove, 2012 graduate and biology major from Headland, said, "Lives were changed. The most exciting part of this whole process is that it is not finished."

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- Limited number of campers accepted; apply early to secure your spot
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NEIGHBORS AND NATIONS

SUMMER 2013 DATES

June 2-8
June 9-15
June 16-22
June 23-29

June 30- July 4
July 7-13
July 14-20
July 21-27
July 28- Aug 3

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CHURCHES ARE ENCOURAGED TO HAVE A TIME OF PRAYER FOR REVIVAL AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING ACROSS OUR STATE DURING THEIR WORSHIP TIMES

PRAYER GATHERINGS

(listed by county, not association)

Autauga, March 26, 10 a.m.

Autauga County Courthouse, 134 North Court St., Prattville

Baldwin, three gatherings on April 16

10 a.m., Baldwin County Courthouse, 312 Courthouse Square, Bay Minette

1 p.m., Baldwin County Courthouse, 1100 Fairhope Ave., Fairhope

3 p.m., Baldwin County Satellite Courthouse, 201 East Section Ave., Foley

Barbour, two gatherings on April 16

9 a.m., Barbour County Courthouse, 303 East Broad St., Eufaula

1 p.m., Barbour County Courthouse, 201 Court Square, Clayton

Bibb, March 13, 9 a.m.

Bibb County Courthouse, 35 Court Square East, Centreville

Blount, May 2, Time TBA

Blount County Courthouse, Oneota

Bullock, March 11, 8:30 a.m.

Bullock County Courthouse, 217 Prairie St. North, Union Springs

Butler, February 28, 11:30 a.m.

Greenville City Hall, 119 East Commerce St., Greenville

Calhoun, April 26, 12:30 p.m.

Calhoun County Courthouse, 25 West 11th St., Anniston

Chambers, March 5, 9 a.m.

Chambers County Courthouse, 2 South Lafayette St., Lafayette

Cherokee, April 16, Noon

Cherokee County Courthouse, 100 Main Street, Centre

Chilton, March 25, 10 a.m.

Chilton County Courthouse, 500 2nd Ave. North, Clanton

Choctaw, April 9, 3 p.m.

Choctaw County Courthouse, 100 West Main St., Butler

Clarke, April 9, 1 p.m.

Clarke County Courthouse, 114 Court St., Grove Hill

Clay, April 2, 11:30 a.m.

Clay County Courthouse, 25 Court Square, Ashland

Cleburne, April 4, Noon

Cleburne County Courthouse, 120 Vickery St., Heflin

Coffee, three gatherings

March 14, 10 a.m., Coffee County Courthouse, 200 Buford St., Elba

March 14, 10 a.m., Coffee County Courthouse, 501 South Main St., Enterprise

March 19, 11 a.m., Sardis Association Office, 806 Highway 52 North, Kinston

Colbert, March 8, 12:30 p.m.

Colbert County Courthouse, 201 North Main St., Tuscumbia

Conecuh, March 12, Noon

Conecuh County Courthouse, Jackson St., Courthouse Square, Evergreen

Coosa, March 25, 2 p.m.

Coosa County Courthouse, 100 Main St., Rockford

Covington, March 28, 11:30 a.m.

Covington County Courthouse, 1 Court Square, Andalusia

Crenshaw, March 26, Noon

Crenshaw County Courthouse, 29 South Glenwood Ave., Luverne

Cullman, February 28, 10 a.m.

Cullman County Courthouse, 500 2nd Ave. Southwest, Cullman

Dale, April 11, 10 a.m.

Dale County Courthouse, 1 Court Square, Ozark

Dallas, March 18, 9 a.m.

Dallas County Courthouse, 105 North Lauderdale St., Selma

DeKalb, March 19, Noon

DeKalb County Courthouse, 300 Grand Ave. South, Fort Payne

Elmore, March 26, 2 p.m.

Elmore County Courthouse, Courthouse Lane, Wetumpka

Escambia, March 14, Noon

Escambia County Courthouse, 314 Belleville Ave., Brewton

Etowah, April 26, 11 a.m.

Etowah County Courthouse, 800 Forest Ave., Gadsden

Fayette, March 12, 10 a.m.

Fayette County Courthouse, 113 Temple Ave. North, Fayette

Franklin, March 5, 11:30

Franklin County Courthouse, 410 Jackson Ave. North, Russellville

Geneva, March 12, 10 a.m.

Geneva County Courthouse, 200 North Commerce St., Geneva

Greene, March 12, 1:30 p.m.

Greene County Courthouse, Eutaw

Hale, March 13, 11:30 a.m.

Hale County Courthouse, 1001 Main St., Greensboro

Henry, two gatherings on April 2

10:30 a.m., Henry County Courthouse, 101 Court Square, Abbeville

1:30 p.m., Headland National Bank, 18057 U.S. Highway 431 South, Headland

Houston, March 21, 10 a.m.

Houston County Courthouse, 114 North Oates St., Dothan

Jackson, March 19, 11 a.m.

Jackson County Courthouse, 102 East Laurel St., Scottsboro

Jefferson, two gatherings on February 24

2 p.m., Jefferson County Main Courthouse, 716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. North, Birmingham

4 p.m., Bessemer Courthouse, 1801 3rd Ave. North, Bessemer

Lamar, March 12, 1 p.m.

Lamar County Courthouse, 44690 Alabama 17, Vernon

Lauderdale, March 8, 11:30 a.m.

Lauderdale County Courthouse, 200 South Court St., Florence

Lawrence, March 7, 11:30 a.m.

Lawrence County Courthouse, 14330 Court St., Moulton

Lee, March 4, 11:30 a.m.

Lee County Courthouse, 215 S. 9th St., (Parksquare in front of courthouse), Opelika

Limestone, February 27, 11:30 a.m.

Limestone County Courthouse, 200 West Washington Street, Athens

Lowndes, April 28, 2 p.m.

Lowndes County Courthouse, South Washington St., Hayneville

Macon, March 11, 11:30 a.m.

Macon County Courthouse, 101 East Rosa Parks Ave., Tuskegee

Madison, February 28, 11:30 a.m.

Madison County Courthouse, 100 Northside Sq., Huntsville

Marengo, March 12, 9 a.m.

Marengo County Courthouse, 101 East Coats Ave., Linden

Marion, March 4, 11:30 a.m.

Marion County Courthouse, 132 Military St. South, Hamilton

Marshall, two gatherings on April 18

Noon, Marshall County Courthouse, 425 Gunter Ave., Guntersville

Noon, Marshall County Courthouse, 116 West Main, Albertville

Mobile, April 8, 2 p.m.

Mobile County Courthouse, 205 Government St., Mobile

Monroe, March 4, 11:30 a.m.

Monroe County Courthouse, 31 Alabama 21, Monroeville

Montgomery, March 13, 10 a.m.

State Capitol, 600 Dexter Ave., Montgomery

Morgan, March 1, 11:30 a.m.

Morgan County Courthouse, 302 Lee Street Northeast, Decatur

Perry, March 18, 11:30 a.m.

Perry County Courthouse, 300 Washington St., Marion

Pickens, March 12, 3 p.m.

Pickens County Courthouse, 20 County Road 35, Carrollton

Pike, April 4, 10 a.m.

Pike County Courthouse, 120 West Church St., Troy

Randolph, April 4, 11:45 a.m.

Randolph County Courthouse, 1 Main St. South, Wedowee

Russell, March 4, 9 a.m. EST

Russell County Courthouse, 1000 Broad St., Phenix City

Shelby, February 28, 2 p.m.

Shelby County Courthouse, 112 North Main St., Columbiana

St. Clair, two gatherings on February 27

10 a.m., St. Clair County Courthouse, 100 6th Ave., Ashville

2 p.m., St. Clair County Courthouse, 1815 Cogswell Ave., Pell City

Sumter, March 12, 11:30 a.m.

Sumter County Courthouse, 115 Franklin St., Livingston

Talladega, April 2, 1 p.m.

Talladega County Courthouse, 1 Court Square, Talladega

Tallapoosa, March 5, 11:30 a.m.

Tallapoosa County Courthouse, 125 North Broadnax St., Dadeville

Tuscaloosa, March 11, 10 a.m.

Tuscaloosa County Courthouse, 714 Greensboro Ave., Tuscaloosa

Walker, March 11, 2 p.m.

Walker County Courthouse, 1900 3rd Ave. South, Jasper

Washington, April 9, 10 a.m.

Washington County Courthouse, 1 Court St., Chatom

Wilcox, March 5, 11:30 a.m.

Wilcox County Courthouse, 100 Broad St., Camden

Winston, March 6, 11:30 a.m.

Winston County Courthouse, 25125 Hwy 195, Double Springs

REGIONAL PRAYER EVENTS

Great Commission Prayer Conference, "AWAKEN: A Prayer Experience"

March 8-9, Highland Baptist Church, Florence

One Night Prayer Rally, April 12, First Baptist Church, Albertville

One Night Prayer Rally, April 26, Hill Crest, Anniston

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Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 17

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen

Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

PURSUING THOSE CALLED TO TELL

Jonah 1:1–4, 7–12, 17; 2:1–4

Which Way Are You Going? (1:1–3)

Despite its brevity, the book of Jonah gives us important insight into God’s character; God loves all people, not just the Israelites. The prophet Jonah actually appears in 2 Kings 14:25, where he communicates the word of God faithfully to the king of Israel’s Northern Kingdom. In the book of Jonah, however, Jonah does the opposite — he refuses to communicate God’s word. Why? In 2 Kings, Jonah is giving, as he sees it, a positive word from God — expanding the borders of Israel. Any Israelite would rejoice at such news. In this second case, Jonah does not like what God wants him to do — he is to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them to repent. Why would Jonah not like this message? Surely, repentance is a good thing. But for Jonah, he did not want the Ninevites to repent. This was the capital city of the Assyrians, no friend of Israel. So instead of doing what God wanted him to do, Jonah decided to go in the opposite direction.

It is easy to follow the Lord when He wants us to do things that we agree with. It is a different matter when God demands of us things that we think are too difficult or just do not want to do. Perhaps God tells us to minister to people that we feel do not deserve God’s grace — drug addicts, drunks, homeless, homosexuals — or people who have hurt us. Or perhaps God wants us to give up our possessions and move to another country — perhaps a Third World country — to spread the gospel. If God is Lord of our lives, what He asks us to do is not up for discussion. Just as a soldier obeys his commander without question, Christians ought to obey without grumbling or questioning the wisdom of God.

Another important lesson from this section is that the Israelites were supposed to be a light for the nations. However, many Israelites felt that God only loved Israel. This passage shows that God is concerned for all

people and wants all people to come to repentance. There are many Christians today who believe that the gospel is really only for Americans. Other countries have their own religions, other countries are filled with people who have rejected the gospel, therefore, let God judge them. This attitude shows a true lack of concern for others. God has shown us grace by sending His Son to die for our sins. We do not deserve salvation because no one deserves salvation. Grace is a free gift — we do not earn it. We should be overwhelmed by this love and try to spread it to all people. Americans have been blessed greatly and we should use our resources to try and spread the gospel to all people or every race, both here in the U.S. and overseas.

What Will It Take? (1:4, 7–12)

God was not going to let Jonah escape his duty, so God caused a violent storm to rise up and threaten the ship and its sailors. Jonah’s disobedience led to the possible injury to others. Thankfully for the sailors, Jonah had them throw him into the water. Interestingly, these pagan sailors did not want to — they showed compassion to a man who was not willing to show compassion to others.

When we choose not to share the gospel with others, we are selfish. We have received God’s grace freely, and yet choose not to share it with others.

To Whom Will You Turn? (1:17–2:4)

Once Jonah was thrown overboard, God sent a large fish to swallow him up. It is at this point that Jonah finally repents of his disobedience. The will of God will not be thwarted and He will do whatever it takes to accomplish His purposes. In this instance He miraculously sent a large fish to capture Jonah. Thankfully God is patient with us. God could have chosen to let Jonah drown, but in His mercy He saved Jonah. We always need to remember God’s mercy shown toward us. If we ever doubt that God loves us, we need only reflect on the death of Christ on our behalf. This should give us all the strength and confidence we need to obey God.

Bible Studies for Life

By Michael Wilson

Director, Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence, Samford University

THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS

1 Timothy 4:7–10; Titus 3:1–9

Religious conversation often includes the use of words Christians understand but others outside the Church find meaningless. An example is the use of the word “godly” to describe someone. What does it mean to be a godly man or godly woman? What does a person have to exhibit in his or her life to qualify as a godly man or woman? If God alone is holy and different from us, sovereign and all-knowing, is it even appropriate for us to refer to someone as godly? God alone is God — and we are not. If we are not careful, we unintentionally create idols of people in the faith for whom we have great respect. Think about the number of so-called “godly” TV preachers and pastors of churches who by their ungodly actions brought harm to others and the cause of Christ. We should offer our attributions of godliness with care. Yet, surely there are criteria we can apply in our own efforts to live in the manner that God wants. For Christians, Jesus offers the model of godly living. His words and actions show us what it means to live a life truly worthy of being described as godly. Today’s lesson offers practical insight from Paul as he taught Timothy about the life of godliness.

The Benefit of Godliness

(1 Tim. 4:7–10)

The key words in verse 7 are “train yourself in godliness.” Paul uses the metaphor of athletic training to emphasize actions that develop one’s faith. Just as athletes engage in ongoing physical conditioning to strengthen their bodies, training in and for righteousness must be ongoing. Regrettably, many of us are seriously out of shape spiritually. The word used by Paul for godliness is a form of the Greek word *eusebeia*. The word can be understood as a sense of awe in the presence of the divine or holy. Attitudes of humility, reverence, obedience and worship are appropriate elements in the meaning of this word. Foremost in our

understanding of godliness must be that humility and reverence before God with obedience and righteous living are necessary if we hope to live lives of godliness.

The Basis of Godliness

(Titus 3:1–8a)

Another pastor mentored by Paul dealt with similar challenges as Timothy. Titus traveled with Paul on church planting excursions. He remained in Crete helping the fledgling Christian community develop their faith. Paul instructed Titus to remind believers to behave in ways that demonstrated application of Jesus’ teachings. Their righteous behavior would be evidence of godliness.

Paul’s words to Titus remind us of words he offered the Church in Galatia: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22). What better description of godly living can be found?

Another way to understand godliness is to consider what *god-less-ness* means. Like the believers in Paul’s time, we too have lived in foolish, disobedient ways, contrary to the way of God. We have not always told the truth. We have not always been kind. We still find it hard to love our neighbor. Yet we know a different way because of Christ. His example of living is our model for godliness.

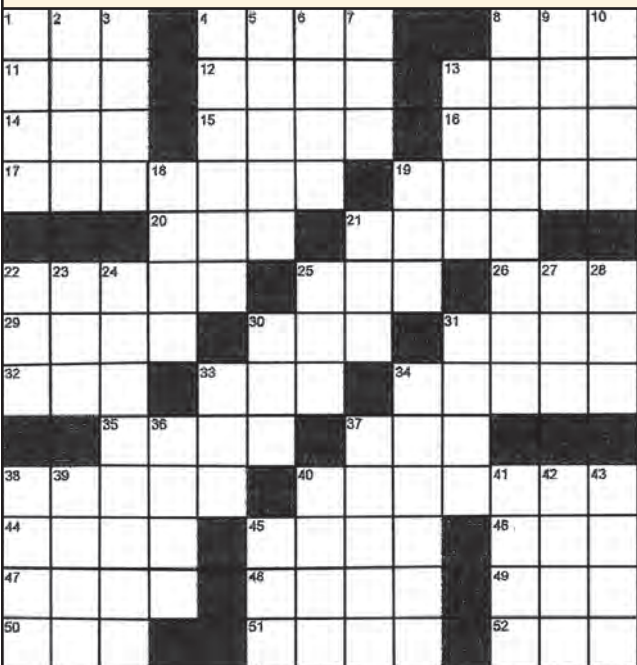
The Devotion to Godliness

(Titus 3:8b–9)

Paul told Titus to “insist emphatically” that the believers keep working to live in a manner worthy of being called godly. They should devote themselves to good works, avoiding peripheral issues of the faith that divide and create quarrels. Instead, they should focus on more important elements of godliness: reverence, humility, kindness, love. The clearest statement of God’s character and activity is found in the verse, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). What it means to live a godly life is very simple — but we struggle daily to put this in practice.

Christian Crossword

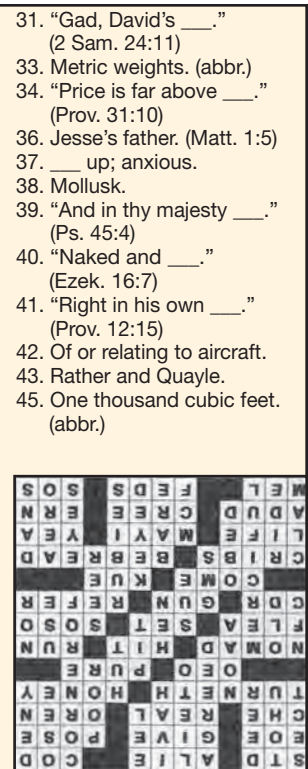
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Across

1. Theology degree. (abbr.)
4. “Men of high degree are ____.” (Ps. 62:9)
8. Type of fish.
11. Hiring policy. (abbr.)
12. Horseleach’s daughters’ cry. (Prov. 30:15)
13. Sit, as for a portrait.
14. Caribbean revolutionary ____ Guevara.
15. Genuine.
16. A son of Jerahmeel. (1 Chron. 2:25)
17. “Whithersoever it ____.” (Prov. 17:8)
19. Recommended food of Prov. 24:13.
20. Economics agency. (abbr.)
21. “The words of the ____.” (Prov. 15:26)
22. Jeremiah 3:2’s “Arabian.”
25. Proverbs 23:35’s “stricken.”
26. “Righteous ____ to it.” (Prov. 18:10)
29. “Thou pursue? ... a ____.” (1 Sam. 24:14)
30. “When he ____ a compass.” (Prov. 8:27)

31. Mediocre, at best.
 32. Military rank. (abbr.)
 33. Pistol.
 34. “I ____ to those.” (1 John 5:16)
 35. “____ up hither.” (Prov. 25:7)
 37. Land mentioned in 2 Chronicles 1:16.
 38. Baby beds.
 40. “Enemy ____ hungry, give him ____.” (Prov. 25:21)
 44. “A tree of ____.” (Prov. 13:12)
 45. Child’s game: Mother, ____?
 46. “Three things, ... ____, four.” (Prov. 30:29)
 47. Failure; ____ real ____.
 48. Algonquian language.
 49. Sea bird.
 50. Torme or Tillis.
 51. FBI agents, for short.
 52. Help!
- Down
1. “The ____ of the Nazarenes.” (Acts 24:5)
 2. Elihu’s father. (1 Sam. 1:1)
 3. “A graceful ____.” (Prov. 5:19)
 4. “They ____ that we should go.” (Gal. 2:9)
 5. “____ not ____ one another.” (Col. 3:9)
 6. City mentioned in 2 Kings 18:34.
 7. Snake-like fish.
 8. “In a ____ the housetop.” (Prov. 21:9)
 9. “And he saith also in ____.” (Rom. 9:25)
 10. “And ____ justice to the oppressed.” (Amos 2:7)
 13. “Better is the ____.” (Prov. 19:1)
 18. Weather agency. (abbr.)
 19. Shack.
 21. “Down into the ____.” (Prov. 1:12)
 22. Football org. (abbr.)
 23. “The beauty of ____ men.” (Prov. 20:29)
 24. “The ____ man doeth good.” (Prov. 11:17)
 25. Zephaniah’s son. (Zech. 6:14)
 27. “Of what ____ is money?” (Prov. 17:16)
 28. “Neither learned wisdom, ____.” (Prov. 30:3)
 30. “If any man will ____ thee.” (Matt. 5:40)



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

CP 1.11 percent above budgeted goal for year

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international causes are 1.11 percent above the budgeted goal and are 2.69 percent behind contributions received during the same time frame last year.

As of Jan. 31, gifts received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee for distribution through the Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget totaled \$63,359,413.41, or 101.11 percent of the \$62,666,666.68 year-to-date budgeted amount, said Frank Page, SBC Executive Committee president. The total is \$1,753,874.22 less than the \$65,113,287.64, received through the end of January 2012, and will support Southern Baptist ministries in the U.S. and internationally.

"We are grateful for each gift contributed to the missions and ministries of the convention," Page said.

"We see encouraging signs that the worst of the sluggish economy may be behind us and continue to pray for the financial well-being of the members of our cooperating churches and their members."

The CP is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the SBC. The total includes contributions from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals.

For the month, a total of \$18,339,654.49 was received for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget.

The CP Allocation Budget is distributed 50.2 percent to missions through the International Mission Board; 22.79 percent to missions through North American Mission Board; 22.16 percent to theological education; 3.2 percent to the SBC operating budget and 1.65 percent to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

True Love Waits celebrates 20-year anniversary

NASHVILLE — True Love Waits morphed from a nameless concept in coffee break conversations into a movement that, beginning in February 1993, steadily spread to teenagers across the country.

That month, 53 youth at Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Old Hickory, Tenn., committed themselves to sexual abstinence before marriage.

In the 20 years since, millions of teenagers have followed suit, bringing abstinence to the national conversation and strengthening innumerable marriages before they ever began. The grassroots movement, calling teenagers to make commitments of purity, celebrated its local-church anniversary with a True Love Waits-themed Disciple Now weekend Feb. 1-3 where the first group of Tulip Grove students made a True Love Waits pledge.

Richard Ross, professor of student ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, cofounded the movement with then fellow-LifeWay employee Jimmy Hester. During the 20th anniversary weekend, Ross watched as a second generation pledged their purity before God.

True Love Waits has spread to more than 100 countries — something for which Ross said only God can receive the credit.

Baptist groups meet to focus on holistic development

WASHINGTON — A Jesus Christ Bread of Life conference planned and sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) on Jan. 30-Feb. 2 brought seven groups, including two that are already member organizations of the BWA, to focus on holistic development as an expression of authentic Christian witness and evangelism. This is the first time in living memory that such a diverse group of Baptists in Haiti has met to participate in an event.

"It was a very good conference," said BWA General Secretary Neville Callam, who presented a paper on the Haitian Baptist story within the broader context of Baptist history. He also noted that Haiti has more Baptists than the rest of the Caribbean combined.

Callam and Fausto Vasconcelos, the BWA director responsible for missions and evangelism, reported that the seven groups represented at the conference decided to form an Alliance of Baptists for Haiti.

The alliance will be an umbrella organization where the groups, while maintaining their independence, may share opportunities in fellowship and ministry.

Jesus Christ Bread of Life is an international training program by the BWA aimed at renewing Baptists' understanding of the mission of God and to stimulate the desire to bear witness to that mission in each local context.



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Lincoln Scholar Carwardine To Deliver Hodges Lectures

Historian Richard Carwardine, president of Corpus Christi College of the University of Oxford, U.K., and author of an award-winning book on Abraham Lincoln, will deliver the Andrew Gerow Hodges Lectures on Feb. 18-19. The lectures, sponsored by Samford's Frances Marlin Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership, are open to the public.

Carwardine will participate in a panel discussion on the topic "'God's Institution' or Gross Injustice? Slavery and Religion before the Civil War" on Feb. 18, at 6 p.m. in Bolding Studio. Joining the panel will be Samford religion professor Joe Scrivner and history professors John Mayfield and Jason Wallace.

Carwardine will speak on "Abraham Lincoln and the Challenge of Emancipation" on Feb. 19, at 10 a.m. in Reid Chapel.

A former history student at Corpus Christi College, Carwardine was elected president in 2010. Carwardine served previously as Rhodes Professor of American History at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, and as professor of American history at the University of Sheffield, U.K.

JUDSON COLLEGE

U.S. Rep. John Lewis To Be Honored: U.S. Rep. John Lewis will speak at Judson College on Feb. 21 on the theme, "A Path to Reconciliation and Healing," and receive the honorary doctorate of humane letters.

Afterward the congressman will sign copies of his books, "Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement" and "Across That Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change."

Born in Troy to a family of sharecroppers, Lewis attended segregated public schools in Pike County. During the height of the civil rights movement in the mid-60s he founded and chaired the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC was largely responsible for organizing student activism including sit-ins and other activities.

Along with Hosea Williams and Albert Turner Sr., of Marion, and Amelia Boynton, of Selma, Lewis led more than 600 protesters across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma on March 7, 1965. Marchers planned to walk to Montgomery to demonstrate the need for voting rights in the state but were attacked

in a brutal confrontation that became known as "Bloody Sunday."

Lewis was elected to Congress in 1986 and has served Georgia's 5th Congressional District since then. Lewis earned degrees from Fisk University and the American Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Nashville.

The ceremony will take place in the Ramsay-McCrummen Chapel at 11 a.m. and the book signing will follow in the Gladys Dunkin Parlors in Jewett Hall.

For more information, contact Billie Jean Young at 334-683-5288.

Judson College to Host Spring Preview and Scholarship Day: Judson College in Marion will host Preview and Scholarship Day on Feb. 16.

Prospective students interested in scholarship testing should register by 8:30 a.m. in Jewett Hall. General registration for those not testing for scholarships will be from 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. also in Jewett Hall.

Available scholarships include one full-tuition and five partial-tuition scholarships.

To register or for more information, call 1-800-447-9472 or email admissions@judson.edu.

Alabama Baptist Leaders at Judson College: Leaders from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) made their annual trip to Judson College chapel Jan. 25. Worship leaders were SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance and Keith Hibbs, SBOM's director of the office of worship leadership and church music.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

Miss University of Mobile 2013 Crowned: Ember Langley was crowned 2013 Miss University of Mobile (UMobile) on Feb. 2 and will represent UMobile for the upcoming year.

Langley, sophomore communication major from Fairhope, performed the song "Glitter and Be Gay" for her talent at the Miss UMobile Pageant held at the Saraland Performing Arts Center. Her platform was "Changing the World with our Fingertips."

The Miss UMobile pageant is an official qualifier sponsored by Miss America.

giving Langley the opportunity to participate in the Miss Alabama pageant in June.

First runner-up was Adrienne Smith, sophomore early childhood and elementary education major from Gilbertown. Smith also won the swimsuit competition.

Second runner-up was Chelsea Seitz, sophomore music major from Mobile. Seitz also won the talent competition.

Miss Congeniality was Holly Dunnam, junior early childhood and elementary education major from Mobile.



LANGLEY



Photo courtesy of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church

MOUNT PLEASANT DEDICATES NEW SANCTUARY

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association, dedicated its new sanctuary Jan. 13. It seats twice as many as the former one. The new building also includes a nursery, Sunday School rooms, a baptistry, rest rooms and a sound room. The project cost \$140,000 and was completed without debt. Craig Gilley is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Bozeman Media

Dove Award-winning Christian rock band Rush of Fools desires to drive home the gospel message with songs.

'Grace Found Me'

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama band Rush of Fools impacts students nationwide

The Alabama-based Christian rock band Rush of Fools is on a mission — to connect students and young adults around the country with the life-changing love of Christ. This Dove

Award-winning group is made up of five guys, and their name derives from 1 Corinthians 1:26–31.

Despite a busy schedule performing concerts, the band remains dedicated to serving the local church. Guitarist and vocalist Kevin Huguley serves as worship pastor at Christ City Church, Birmingham.

Ministering to teenagers is especially important to the band, and during the summer they lead worship for LifeWay's Centrifuge and Student Life camps.

Wherever Rush of Fools performs, their desire is to bring people into a closer relationship with God.

"Even though we are a rock band, we try to write songs that are more reflective to drive home the gospel message," Huguley said. "We will never shy away from the fact that Jesus is the hero of the story.

"A mom came up to us after a concert, with tears in her eyes, and told us that her son and daughter got saved because of the lyrics of the song, 'Grace Found Me.' She said that we would never know the impact this song has had on her family and in leading them to the Lord. That is riveting to our souls."

Their third album, "We Once Were," is a high-energy mix of songs packed with a powerful message.

"We desperately want to be known for telling the truth about the gospel — because it has changed and wrecked our lives in the best possible way," Huguley said.

"We have gone through some very difficult events and tough seasons. We take comfort, find

beauty and redemption in God using those experiences for His good. Our desire is that God will change hearts through these songs and people will hear the story of God's sovereignty in each song. In good times and in bad times, we want people to know that God still reigns."



"Our desire is that God will change hearts through these songs and people will hear the story of God's sovereignty in each song."

Kevin Huguley
Rush of Fools

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Preteen boys charged with 'contempt' of Islam

BENI SUEF, Egypt — Two boys, accused of allegedly showing contempt of Islam and arrested in late September 2012, are soon to stand trial.

Attorney Karam Gabriel said anti-Christian hostilities in the restive country are getting worse as the two boys are to be tried in a court in Beni Suef for showing "contempt to Islamic religion and insulting the Koran."

The boys, Nabil Naji Rizq and Mina Atallah (identified in some press reports as Mina Nadi Faraj), were 10 and 9 years old respectively at the time of their arrest.

The accusation made headlines throughout the country after a man allegedly saw Rizq and Atallah playing in trash that he claimed included pages from the Koran. The report filed against Rizq and Atallah accused the boys of tearing pages of Islam's holy book — a later version of the story had them allegedly urinating on it. They were released in early October.

Angry protestors from Beni Suef reportedly intimidated Christian residents of the nearby village of Ezbat Marco at that time and prevented them from going to work.

"They are just small children, and they don't really understand what all the fuss is about — they can't even tell the difference between the Koran, the Bible or any other holy book," Gabriel said.

Clearly outraged at recent cases of hostility toward Coptic Christians in the post-Hosni Mubarak era, Gabriel said that since Mohamed Morsi came to power in June 2012, the Christian community is in dire need of protection. Tensions are such that, for the moment, there is no information on the exact date of the two boys' trial, as authorities fear it will exacerbate hostilities in the city.

Abducted girl's family threatened in Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan — A powerful Pakistani politician's aid who abducted a Christian girl from her home in Karachi has warned her parents that the same fate awaits their other daughters unless they drop charges against him and leave the city, the family said.

Khursheed Bibi told Morning Star News that Ghaji Khan, a close aide of Sindh Provincial Minister for Local Government Agha Siraj Durrani, had abducted 15-year-old Asma Masih from their house Dec. 10 and forced her to marry him and convert to Islam. Authorities have refused to take Khan into custody in spite of court orders to arrest him, according to the family.

"We told the police that Ghaji is threatening us, telling us to withdraw the case or else he would abduct my other daughters, but our pleas have fallen on deaf ears," Bibi said. "We have lost our daughter, but now it seems we also have to relocate to another city to protect my other daughters."

The girl's mother, brother and father Rehmat Masih saw her in the company of Khan's underlings Jan. 28 — and heard her plead for them to rescue her, her mother said — after a family member informed them that Khan and Asma had been seen at the Sindh High Court. The family members rushed to the high court from a hearing at the judicial magistrate's court, Bibi said.

Police raid Baptist services in Kazakhstan

PETROPAVL, Kazakhstan — At least eight separate meetings for worship in Kazakhstan were raided by the authorities in January, according to Forum 18 news service. Raids on Baptists were made, police claimed, "to counter manifestations of religious extremism and terrorism."

It seems that some raids — which police insist were not raids — took place after official monitoring of the religious communities.

Speaking of a raid on Jehovah's Witnesses, police Major Kanat Rakhmetzhanov told Forum 18 that: "It is not against the law to gather to watch football, read poetry or drink vodka. But our lads wouldn't have gone to such a meeting for no reason. We had reliable information that prayers were being said."

Police gave evidence that Pastor Aleksandr Kerker illegally "stood at the pulpit and read Psalms from the Bible, then those present sang Christian hymns."

Fines for the unregistered exercise of religious freedom were imposed on three Baptist pastors. They were each fined the equivalent of nearly two months average wages for this "offense."