

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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"If My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

praying **ACROSS** alabama

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

II Chron. 7:14

Statewide prayer emphasis focuses on revival, spiritual awakening

After months of preparation, Praying Across Alabama is set to kick off Feb. 24, calling Alabama Baptists to pray for revival and spiritual awakening in their communities, their state, their nation and their world.

Not surprisingly, the statewide prayer emphasis is actually the result of much prayer, according to Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"Personally, I have felt a heavy burden on my heart for our state, and others have shared that same sense of concern. After much prayer and planning, the idea came of taking prayer events to every county in our state," Lance said.

The result of this planning is two months of events inspired by the challenge in 2 Chronicles 7:14 for God's people to humble themselves in prayer.

"Praying Across Alabama involves

a four-fold approach to bring God's people together to pray for revival and spiritual awakening," said Mike Jackson, director of the office of leadership and church health for SBOM and prayer coordinator for Praying Across Alabama.

Intentional effort

The statewide prayer emphasis begins with a Day of Prayer in Alabama Baptist churches Feb. 24. Jackson said churches are encouraged to make an intentional effort on that Sunday to highlight scrip-

tural imperatives about prayer and to designate prayer time in their services.

Jackson added that the Day of Prayer also is a good time to acquaint members with a second element of the emphasis, a resource titled "A 60-Day Prayer Guide for Revival and Spiritual Awakening." The prayer guide features daily devotionals written by missionaries, pastors and leaders from Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, men's ministry, disaster relief and other areas of Alabama Baptist life and is

available as a free daily email.

In the two months that follow the Day of Prayer, SBOM leaders, directors of missions, pastors and lay members will gather at or near every county courthouse in Alabama to pray. This third aspect of Praying Across Alabama also is three-fold in nature, Lance said.

First, he said, is the need to pray for ourselves, "not in a selfish way, but rather in a desire to see our lives count for the cause of Christ."

The location of the prayer gathering (See 'Praying,' page 4)

Kick-off day gatherings

February 24

▶ 2 p.m., **Jefferson County Main Courthouse**, 716 Richard Arrington Jr. Boulevard North, Birmingham, west side facing Linn Park

▶ 4 p.m., **Bessemer Courthouse**, 1801 3rd Avenue North, Bessemer

For a full schedule, visit www.alsbom.org.



Jefferson County Main Courthouse
Birmingham

COMMENT

An Unlikely Place for Worship

A Rotary club meeting may seem like an unlikely place for a worship experience, especially this Rotary club meeting. On Feb. 6, the Rotary Club of Birmingham celebrated its 100th anniversary. Rotary International President Sakuji Tanaka, of Japan, was on hand to offer congratulations on this milestone achievement, in part, because the Birmingham club is the world's largest Rotary club.

Incidentally, when Rotary International celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2005, an Alabama Baptist, the late Glenn E. Estess Sr., a member of Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook, was the Rotary International president.

Planners for the Birmingham club's centennial event wanted to make the Rotary meeting memorable so before the Japanese dignitary stood to speak, the award-winning University of Alabama at Birmingham classic gospel choir was introduced to entertain club members and guests.

The college students plunged into a lively rendition of "How Great is our God." You would have thought it was a Sunday morning church service as they called on members to lift their hands in praise to God and some did.

Greatness of God

Perhaps it was the setting that caused me to listen to the words of the song more carefully than ever before. At the table where I sat were members of Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches. All seemed to know the song and some hummed along.

Also in the room were Hindus, Buddhists, Shintos and Jews. There may have been other religions represented. The words of the song praised God's greatness but they said nothing about why. The song contained no unique reference to the Christian God though it is commonly sung in Christian churches.

It was rather shocking to realize that all in the room could affirm the greatness of God because of the generic references about the Deity. I even wondered if that was the reason the song had been chosen for the occasion. It would offend no one.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Before singing a second song, the choir's leader referenced Rotary's motto of "Service above Self." He explained the next song was about Jesus who put "service above self" when He died on a cross to pay the price for our sin and to give eternal life to all who believe on His name.

Immediately the choir began a gospel song I did not know and for about the next five minutes repeated the message over and over again that Jesus died for our sins and that life eternal was possible through Him.

As the choir sang, God's Holy Spirit moved, at least in my heart. All I could do was bow my head and offer prayers of praise for the truth of the song and petition God that the repetition of the message might drive that truth deep into the hearts of all in the room.

Later a Presbyterian pastor asked me what I thought of our club meeting. "It was a worship service," I replied and the pastor agreed. For both of us it was an unexpected worship event. It was a reminder that worship does not depend on outward circumstances. Nor is worship confined to particular places or predetermined times.

Worship is spontaneous. It is an act of the

heart. Worship is offered to God because He is worthy of worship. The two Old English words which make up the word worship mean "worthship." It is a quality of being worthy. Because God is God, He deserves our praise and thanksgiving.

Worship also is an individual act. Whether one is surrounded by fellow church members on Sunday morning or sitting around a table on a weekday afternoon, worship is still done on an individual basis. That is why some Rotarians squirmed uncomfortably in their chairs as the choir sang of Jesus' "service above self" while others worshipped the Risen Lord.

One can see the same dynamic on Sunday morning when some church members leave a service having encountered God while others have just attended a religious function.

God's Holy Spirit is always the energizer of worship. That implies a relationship with God who promised His Spirit as a guaranty to the believer of greater things to come (2 Cor. 1:22). Relationships are always changing, even one's relationship with God. That is one reason something that prompts one believer to worship may not prompt another.

Worship is not only done "in spirit," it is done in truth (John 4:23-24). Those moments of worship at Rotary were in response to the truth of the song that Jesus died for our sins. Worship is always in

response to the truth of God's redeeming love.

Oftentimes Christians act as if worship can only take place in certain places or done in certain ways. We forget that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not limited in their worship of God by holy places, holy rituals or holy times. And neither are we.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day kept all of Moses' laws concerning worship. Yet Jesus said their actions were in vain because "their hearts are far from Me" (Matt. 15:8). True worship is about what happens in the inner person, not about outward circumstances. It is about adoration and reverence. It is about praise and thanksgiving. It is about obedience and sacrifice.

The Bible is clear. Christians can worship anywhere and anytime the truth of God is proclaimed and the Spirit of God is at work. That may be in a worship service. It may be in a Rotary club meeting. It may be in the midst of nature. There is no telling when or how we will hear the truth of God and be prompted by God's Spirit to worship Him.

"God's Holy Spirit is always the energizer of worship. That implies a relationship with God who promised His Spirit as a guaranty to the believer of greater things to come (2 Cor. 1:22)."

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

PRISON MINISTRY CARDS

This is to thank all of you across Alabama who helped with our MAC D Christmas Card Ministry for Limestone Correctional Facility. Over 8,200 Christmas cards were donated and delivered before Christmas. We received a note saying what a blessing the cards are. We could not do it if you had not helped us. Thank you.

We are collecting Easter Cards for this ministry now. If you enjoy helping, we hope you will get some Easter Cards to us. Sign your cards, but do not put your home address on the cards and please do not seal them.

Cover them with prayer before you send them to MAC D Card Ministry, 4030 6th St. East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404, to arrive by March 16. Call

305-553-1592 or email adunnam4030@comcast.net if you have questions.

Thank you for caring and sharing in this ministry.
Scarlett Dunnam
Tuscaloosa, Ala.





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

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Reuters photo

Sherry Johnson Parker and her daughter, Olivia Parker, hold signs along Highway 231 asking drivers to pray for Ethan who was taken hostage after a bus driver was shot and killed near Midland City.

Alabama Baptists minister during hostage situation in Midland City

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Throughout his captivity and following his rescue Feb. 4, the plight of Ethan Gilman made headlines.

The now 6-year-old — who for days was held hostage in an underground bunker in Midland City by an abductor — is back in the arms of his family and even recently made an appearance on national T.V. with his mother, Jennifer Kirkland, for an exclusive interview about the ordeal.

During those harrowing days as Ethan was held hostage and countless people waited and prayed for his safety, there were those who worked behind the scenes to provide food, needed supplies and support to Ethan's family and law enforcement.

Jim Hill, pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Ozark, is a North American Mission Board-endorsed disaster relief chaplain through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and serves on the board of directors for The Salvation Army in Dale County. He was called by The Salvation Army to be a chaplain during the hostage crisis.

Hill, along with two other area pastors, spent several days ministering one-on-one to Ethan's family. With the assistance of Kenneth Hale, director of missions for Dale Baptist Association, and Ken Farley, church development director for Columbia Baptist Association, Hill said that chaplains for the crisis were provided around the clock.

Hill encouraged the chaplains to shake hands with those working at the site and let them know they were being prayed for. He said that almost every time he spoke with one of those people, the person would express gratefulness at how the community had come

together in such a remarkable manner.

And that unity showed itself in many ways: the tables of homemade snacks for law enforcement, the area high school students who organized prayer vigils, and the support from businesses and individuals. "It was a huge community effort," Hill said.

Hale agreed. "It was not one group — it was everybody working together," he said, noting that Dale Association worked in conjunction with The Salvation Army to provide assistance. The Salvation Army coordinated food for the law enforcement command center and churches offered their support.

Dale Association stepped up to deliver snacks and Gatorade, and various churches within the association provided meals. Hale recalled a particular meal where approximately 300 people were fed.

He added that Dale Association worked in partnership with Columbia Association, and he noted how the community united to meet people's needs. "It was just an unbelievably cooperative effort between the whole community, churches and associations," he said.

And even in other areas of the state, people like Carrie Kreps took steps to help through a fundraising effort. A Samford University alumna and member of

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, Kreps was "deeply affected" by Ethan's ordeal.

After Ethan's rescue and a friend of Kreps got approval from Ethan's family, she began an online fundraiser called "Send Ethan to Disney World." In one day, the goal of \$7,000 was met, and as of Feb. 9 more than \$10,600 had been pledged by nearly 300 donors. Any remaining funds will be added to a trust fund that has been established for Ethan. (Samford contributed)



HILL



Photo by Philip Hicks

NEW BIVOCATIONAL OFFICERS ELECTED

New officers for 2013-2014 elected at the bivocational minister/spouse retreat at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center on Feb. 8-9 are (l to r) Eric Sullivan, Liberty Baptist Church, Bessemer, vice president/president elect; Victor Bonner, Corinth Baptist Church, Elrod, president; and Harold Donald, Cane Creek Baptist Church, Warrior, secretary/treasurer.

Praying Across Alabama provides hope, chance to turn around spiritual climate

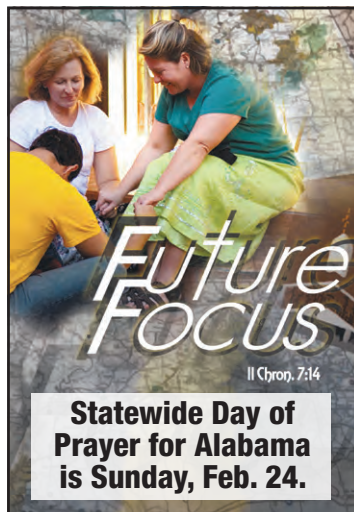
(continued from page 1)
ings is significant as well, offering a reminder to pray for elected and appointed government officials, Lance said. Finally, the prayer gatherings are evangelistic.

"We have a need to pray for souls and evangelistic praying is effective praying," Lance said. "People still need the Lord and we are called to be witnesses to them. Praying for them prepares us to be better witnesses."

The fourth element of Praying Across Alabama will be regional prayer rallies featuring speakers and worship leaders from state and national Baptist life.

The first of these regional rallies will be the Great Commission Prayer Conference, "AWAKEN: A Prayer Experience," on March 8-9, at Highland Baptist Church, Florence. On April 12, a one-night prayer rally will be held at First Baptist Church, Albertville. A second one-night rally will be held April 26 at Hill Crest Baptist Church, Anniston.

Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Baptist Association, has been excited about Praying Across Alabama since he



first heard about the plans.

"I thought, 'This is it!' This emphasis on prayer is what is going to turn around the spiritual climate in our churches," he said.

Dutton said numbers indicating fewer baptisms, lower average church attendance and decreased giving are discouraging, especially to leaders and pastors.

"One of the reasons I was so excited is that I don't think we have any other hope. When people

turn and seek the Lord, revival can happen," he said. "This is simply a call to get our churches doing what we should have been doing all along."

Dutton noted that the free resources provided by the SBOM to promote the event have gotten people in his association excited, noting that participants in a recent Vacation Bible School clinic were lining up to get Praying Across Alabama wristbands.

Other promotional items, including pens, commitment cards and brochures, are also available, and Jackson hopes that churches will use the resources to encourage their members to get involved in Praying Across Alabama.

Jackson said all resources are available through the Praying Across Alabama link at the SBOM website, www.alsbom.org, or at www.prayingacrossalabama.org. The online resource order form also includes a place to subscribe to the "60-Day Prayer Guide." Once on the Praying Across Alabama page, click on "Commit to Pray" and submit the online form. For more information, call 1-800-264-1225.

Obama talks about faith at prayer breakfast

President Obama, appearing at his fifth National Prayer Breakfast on Feb. 6, touted the power of prayer to create unity and humility in a 20-minute speech to more than 3,000 people.

While an interfaith event, the prayer breakfast has a heavily evangelical Christian emphasis. It is sponsored by members of Congress who meet weekly for prayer when Congress is in session. Every U.S. president since Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953 has attended the annual event that attracts thousands from around the world.

At this year's event Obama shared the dais with first lady Michelle Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and keynoter Benjamin S. Carson, director of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

Opera star Andrea Bocelli sang "Ave Maria" for the gathering and Gabrielle Douglas, the gold-medal-winning Olympic gymnast, offered the closing prayer.

During his remarks, Obama steered clear of political topics and spoke of his faith in both personal and general terms.

'I search Scripture'

"Sometimes I search Scripture to determine how best to balance life as a president and as a husband and as a father. I often search for Scripture to figure out how I can be a better man as well as a better president," he said. "And I believe that we are united in these struggles. But I also believe that we are united in the knowledge of a redeeming Savior, whose grace is sufficient for the multitude of our sins and whose love is never failing."

Obama also took the opportunity to chide lawmakers from both parties for Washing-

ton's ongoing partisan divide.

"I do worry sometimes that as soon as we leave the prayer breakfast, everything we've been talking about the whole time at the prayer breakfast seems to be forgotten," Obama said to laughter. "I mean, you'd like to think that the shelf life wasn't so short. But I go back to the Oval Office, and I start watching the cable news networks and it's like we didn't pray."

Obama then called for humility among political leaders "for no one can know the full and encompassing mind of God."

As examples of how the nation withstood times of deeper divisions, the president turned to the faith journeys of President Abraham Lincoln and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (BP, RNS)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

Steve E. Tondera Sr.

Former state convention president Tondera dies

Steve E. Tondera Sr., of Huntsville, a former Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) president and one of only a handful of lay church members elected to the position, died Feb. 13. He was 79.

A native of Bellmead, Texas, Tondera received a degree in mathematics and physics from Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1957 and was stationed at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.

Tondera held leadership roles in both civic and charitable organizations, was a charter member of NASA and served as ABSC president in the late 1980s.

"Steve Tondera was a layperson who was vitally interested in Alabama Baptist life," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "His sacrifice of time took him away from his business, but he was glad to make the time for service to the Lord and for Alabama Baptists. He served more than two terms as president, filling in for Lewis Marler, who had to resign due to his ailing health. Steve then was elected twice to the position of president."

Lance noted that Tondera was known for his unique sense of humor and witty sayings.

"Alabama Baptists appreciate his service and we pray for his family as they mourn his loss," Lance said.

Tondera was a member of First Baptist Church, Huntsville. He is survived by his wife, Bonnie; three children; and six grandchildren. (TAB)



TONDERA

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

George Washington University recalls Baptist roots

WASHINGTON — George Washington University's (GWU) Baptist origins were celebrated Feb. 8-9 as GWU representatives, student Baptist ministries and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC) and its affiliated churches gathered for GWU's second annual Founder's Day.

GWU was founded in 1821 as Columbian College by Baptist leaders Luther Rice and Obadiah Brown and other representatives from the Triennial Convention, the first national Baptist denomination in the United States. The leaders set out to create a nonsectarian institute of higher education, meaning anyone could attend or teach without regard to religious beliefs — a stance the private university has maintained for nearly two centuries.

Ricky Creech, executive director/minister of DCBC and former Alabama Baptist, said, "Participating in Founder's Day ... was a reminder to me of dreamers of the past who were not only committed to Baptist principles but to educating the emerging leaders of the future," Creech said.

GuideStone: HHS proposed rule not enough

DALLAS — GuideStone Financial Resources is working through the legislative route to address the concerns of pro-lifers regarding the abortion/contraceptive mandate. GuideStone will consider legal action if legislators fail to address the mandate's impact on church health plans, GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins reported.

Hawkins made the comments in light of a Feb. 1 announcement by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that the federal agency said addressed the concerns of churches and religious organizations. The proposed rule change by HHS, Hawkins said, does ease the concerns of some churches who might not have been exempt from the mandate, but the proposed rule does not go far enough to protect religious organizations.

Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to Date through January 31, 2013

JANUARY

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| CP Challenge Budget Goal | \$3,558,333 |
| CP Challenge Budget Gifts..... | \$4,479,109 |
| Over Goal for Month..... | \$920,776 |

YEAR TO DATE

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| CP Challenge Budget Goal | \$3,558,333 |
| CP Challenge Budget Gifts..... | \$4,479,109 |
| Over Goal for Year..... | \$920,776 |

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

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NAMB photo

North American Mission Board missionary Peter Yanes (left) greets Haitian Pastor Wadner Gedeon in Philadelphia. Yanes assists church planters like Gedeon with leadership development and mobilization strategy.



NAMB photo

Serving as a pastor in his native Philippines prepared North American Mission Board missionary Peter Yanes for the opportunities he finds to preach, like at a Filipino community church service held in a Philadelphia park.

A heart to mobilize

Filipino pastor serves as catalyst for ethnic church planters in Philadelphia

If anyone understands the impact church planting and evangelism can have on someone, it's Peter Yanes. Together, the two changed his life.

Born and raised in the islands of the Philippines, Yanes grew up in a predominantly Roman Catholic nation with a family deeply devoted to the church. Yanes himself spent much of his youth serving as an altar boy with aspirations of one day becoming a priest.

All that changed with an invitation.

"I was in high school and a friend invited me to a Bible study," Yanes recalled. "That's where I came to know Jesus Christ in a personal way. Since then there's been no turning back."

The church that hosted this Bible study was a church plant started by a Filipino planter.

"Church planting is very special and important to me because without it, I wouldn't be where I am," Yanes explained.

This heart for church planting makes Yanes the perfect fit for his role as a mobilization missionary for the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey. Based in Philadelphia, Yanes' work as a mobilizer for the area allows him to identify and support planters and partners as they start and grow new churches. With only 400 Southern Baptist Convention congregations serving a population of more than 15 million in the convention, the area needs new churches. For his part, Yanes is working specifically to catalyze ethnic church planters to reach the growing number of people groups in the area.

"My ministry allows me to build great relationships with

our ethnic pastors," Yanes said. "Having relationships and support can be such an asset because their position can be very lonely and very tough at times."

This is a feeling Yanes knows firsthand. After pastoring a church in the Philippines, he and his wife, Irene, made the move to the United States in 1998 and began the work of church planting in Philadelphia.

He has spent the better part of the last 14 years serving the growing ethnic population in Philadelphia. Yanes supported the now thriving Philadelphia Bible Church International in its early years in an effort to provide a place of worship for Filipino transplants living in the city. By taking on his current role, Yanes can share his experiences in ethnic church planting with others like him looking to reach their own diverse communities.

"Philadelphia is a very diverse city with many ethnicities and nationalities," Yanes explained. "Anything that I can do to help planters build relationships with their people groups and eventually share the message of the gospel in cities like Philly is important. It takes a great relationship with all of our ethnic pastors around the area to see this happen."

One such person he is pouring his leadership into and building a relationship with is fellow Filipino church planter Noel Geniza. While serving as both worship leader and deacon at Philadelphia Bible Church International, Geniza's heart for ministry caught Yanes' eye.

"Noel has been a faithful member of our church for so long," Yanes said. "Back home in the Philippines, he was a pastor and it's clear this is his calling. It was just a matter of time before he stepped back into it here."

Having settled in Pottstown, a suburb some 50 miles north of Philadelphia, Geniza and his family were traveling every Sunday to attend Philadelphia Bible Church International and worship with a Filipino community. However, the continuous commute proved taxing on the Geniza family and Noel began to see the need for a church like this closer to home.

"I thought Pastor Pete would probably work to start a church in our area, and I would just support him as a worship leader," Geniza explained. "Instead he prayed for me and said, 'Why don't you start the church?' Church planting has always been on my heart so when he said this I thought, 'Yeah, why don't I?'"

Yanes has quickly come alongside Geniza to begin the process of planting a church to reach the Filipino community of Pottstown. This support has made all the difference for Geniza as he walks the long, sometimes lonely road of church planting.

"I know that on this path, God is with me," Geniza said, "but I also know Pastor Pete is with me. He says, 'I'll be there. I'll support you,' and that is a big encouragement to keep going."

This heart to mobilize and encourage planters as they seek to save the lost through church planting and evangelism is the driving force behind the work Yanes does.

Reaching the lost

"What I like most about what I do is seeing souls come to know Christ in a personal way," Yanes said. "Because of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, I can partner with local churches, pray for and encourage their pastors and mobilize them to reach the lost in their communities. I am so grateful to do the work I love, the work the Lord has called me to do."

The annual Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 3-10, and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering provide support for Yanes and other missionaries like him 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 information on Yanes, visit anniearmstrong.com/peteryanes. For information on reaching Philadelphia with the gospel, visit namb.net/Philadelphia. (NAMB)

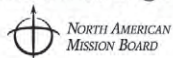
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
North American Missions
March 3-10, 2013

**WHATEVER
IT TAKES**
REACHING THE ONE

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FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

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National goal: \$70,000,000

AnnieArmstrong.com



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, Ext. 112 at least three weeks prior to the event.

BIRMINGHAM

▶ As part of a collaborative effort with **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, and the School of Arts at Samford University in Birmingham, Samford will host church musician and teacher John Ferguson on campus as guest lecturer in music and worship Feb. 28–March 3. As part of his visit Ferguson will serve as organist in the 9:40 a.m. and 11 a.m. worship services March 3 at Dawson. The church also will hold a hymn festival March 3, 6 p.m. featuring the Dawson Sanctuary Choir, brass ensemble and a number of Ferguson's compositions and arrangements. For information call Eric Mathis at 205-726-2323. Gary Fenton is pastor of Dawson. ▶ **Eastside Church, Birmingham**, will host Rick and Cyndi Busby in concert Feb. 24. They will be in the morning service at 10:45 a.m. and in concert at 6 p.m. Mark Smith is pastor. ▶ **First Church, Birmingham**, will host guest speaker David George, WMU Foundation president, March 5, 10:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. The emphasis will be North American missions. For lunch reservations call 205-870-3888. Charles Carter is interim pastor.

GENEVA

▶ **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host The 39er's C.L.U.B. (Christians Living Under the Blood!) nondenominational luncheon March 12, 11 a.m. Ricky Hall, pastor of Shiloh Church, Hartford, will speak. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by March 5. Mike Shirah is pastor.

MARSHALL

▶ **Sardis Church, Boaz**, will hold "Spring Revival" March 3–6, Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 7 p.m. Phil Waldrep will speak Sunday; Phil Hoskins will speak and Mike Foust will sing Monday; Junior Hill will speak and Danny Riley will sing Tuesday; Jackie Kaye will speak and Bruce Taliaferro will sing Wednesday. Everyone is welcome. For information call 256-593-7762. Mike Goforth is pastor.

MOBILE

▶ **Woodridge Church, Mo-**

bile, will host the Synergistic Evangelism Seminar led by Darrell Robinson on Feb. 23, 8:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Mobile Baptist Association and Woodridge Church are the sponsors. To register call 251-633-6000 or Len Chilton at 251-490-5507. Mack Morris is pastor.

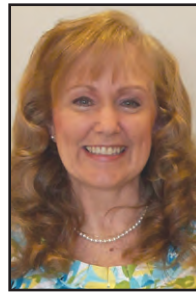
TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Kramer Mize** is the new pastor of **Woodland Park Church, Tuscaloosa**. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Alabama and is currently pursuing a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. His wife is Elizabeth. ▶ **Susan Campbell** is the new children's minister of



MIZE

Taylorville Church, Tuscaloosa. She holds a bachelor of music education degree from Troy University and a bachelor of science degree in elementary education from Auburn University. She previously served as children's minister and other positions for 30 years at Ridgecrest Church, Montgomery. She and her husband, Robert, have three children. Curtis Kelley is pastor.



CAMPBELL

MUD CREEK

▶ **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing Feb. 24, 1:30 p.m. with The Dotsons. It was moved from March 31. Johnny Thacker is pastor.

Alabama Ministries

Kate DeWitt Darden has joined Baptist Health System (BHS) as vice president for marketing and communications, according to Keith Parrott, BHS executive vice president and chief operating officer. "In this role she will oversee branding and marketing efforts for BHS and our four hospitals," Parrott said. Darden brings with her 20 years of experience in strate-

gic marketing and branding. Darden holds leadership roles in the Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama, MOMENTUM Women's Leadership Program and Jones Valley Teaching Farm. A native of Oklahoma City, Darden graduated from Spring Hill College in Mobile. She also is a graduate of the seventh class of MOMENTUM. (BHS)



Photo courtesy of Circlewood Baptist Church

CIRCLEWOOD HONORS SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, honors Betty Krebs (center) for 50 years of faithful service as a Sunday School teacher. Most of her years were spent in the preschool department. Pictured with her are Pastor Herb Thomas (left) and Minister of Music Winton Patterson.

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REVERSE MORTGAGE NEWS

You Can Beat FHA's Deadline

By Jimmy Dixon

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 don't 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

would 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.



Jimmy Dixon

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@mcgo-winking.com.



#207518

— Correction —

The Feb. 7 article "Conversational English reaches internationals in Montgomery area" stated the ESL training was provided by the IMB. It was provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in conjunction with the North American Mission Board.

— Paid Advertising —

Legacy GIFTS

86 percent of churches provide no estate planning

The majority of Southern Baptist pastors believe Christians should include a legacy gift to a ministry or church, but 86 percent of their churches provide no assistance for estate planning, according to a study by LifeWay Research.

LifeWay Research conducted a survey of Southern Baptist pastors on behalf of the Southern Baptist Foundation (SBF) to gauge the awareness and preparedness of churches to issues surrounding estate planning, investments and wills.

According to the survey, 84 percent of Southern Baptist churches received no estate gifts in the year preceding the poll. Eleven percent received one estate gift and just 1 percent received three or more gifts the previous year.

Churches that reported receiving at least one gift bequest received an average of \$22,507.

“One of the issues revealed by the research is the need for education,” said Warren Peek, president of the Nashville-based SBF.

Providing information

“While the research shows pastors believe the estate planning of Christians should include gifts for the future health and financial ability of a church or ministry, four out of five pastors — 86 percent — have not provided their congregation with seminars or even basic information such as fliers and notices on estate planning in the past year,” Peek said.

Nine percent of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches surveyed did report providing information on estate planning, and 3 percent have held a seminar on estate planning. Seven percent indicate they publish notices that gifts of nonliquid assets (such as stocks, real estate, cars) are accepted.

Pastors also were asked if their church has three things in place related to estate planning: 3 percent say they have an endowment, 10 percent have a process for the disposition of

nonliquid assets given as gifts; and 12 percent have a scholarship fund. Eighty percent have none of these.

The study also revealed that while 72 percent of pastors agree “Christians should include a legacy gift to a church or ministry in their estate plan,” 40 percent of pastors don’t know if their congregation would want to contribute to the church with estate planning. Another 29 percent say their congregation would not want to contribute to the church with estate planning.

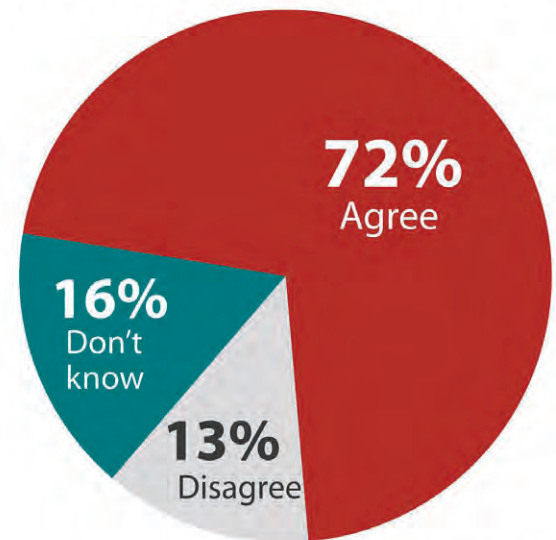
The LifeWay Research study shows that Southern Baptist pastors are much more inclined to preach on the importance of giving from one’s income than one’s assets. Eighty-five percent of pastors agree they “regularly preach on believers giving a portion of their income to God’s work.” This compares to 59 percent of pastors who agree they regularly preach on believers giving a portion of their assets to God’s work.

According to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, the average charitable estate gift in 2010 was \$70,000. LifeWay Research asked pastors how they would most want to use these funds if they were to receive a gift of this size today. Among the 11 uses listed, pastors would most want to use a gift of that size for capital improvements (26 percent); 15 percent selected “pay off church debt”; 10 percent would begin a new ministry; 8 percent would plant a new church; 8 percent would hire a staff member; 7 percent would want to improve the church’s cash position. Other answers included purchase land (4 percent), purchase equipment for existing ministries (4 percent) and other capital investments (3 percent). Only 1 percent of pastors surveyed would create an endowment.

“The importance of being prepared and having a plan for the future cannot be understated,” Peek said. “It is clear pas-

Among Southern Baptist Pastors:

I believe Christians should include a legacy gift to a church or ministry in their estate plan.



Note: Total not 100% due to rounding.

LifeWayResearch.com



tors have a desire to serve their congregations in the area of giving and to foster an environment of generosity that benefits future generations.

“Two practical steps pastors can take to cultivate this type of thinking are to put a process in place to accept and dispose of gifts of nonliquid assets and to make available information on estate planning,” Peek said.

The SBF was established in 1947 and serves as a subsidiary of the SBC Executive Committee to provide investment and estate planning services for SBC entities, institutions and individuals.

These questions were asked as part of a mail survey of Southern Baptist pastors conducted April 1–May 11, 2012, that included the option of completing it online. The mailing list was randomly drawn from a stratified list of all Southern Baptist churches. The 1,066 completed surveys were weighted to match the actual geographic distribution and worship attendance of SBC churches. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.0 percent. Margins of error are higher in subgroups. (BP)



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Mobile Bible conference to focus on sharing Jesus, making disciples

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

The University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) football coach Hugh Freeze and Truett-McConnell College President Emir Caner are just two of the many speakers set to take the stage at the upcoming Bible & Evangelism Conference presented by James E. Messer Ministries, Inc.

The conference, which runs March 10-14, is sponsored by Mobile Baptist Association and will be hosted by Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile.

The conference kicks off at the church March 10 at 10:15 a.m. with speaker John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, followed by Freeze during the evening session at 5 p.m.

Charles Brown, pastor of Government Street Baptist, said his church is excited about hosting the conference.

Messer, a pastor for 20 years before entering full-time evangelism, has put on approximately 50 conferences in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee and Louisiana. He said the purpose of the Bible & Evangelism Conference is to lead people to Christ as well as help people become disciples of Christ.

"Anybody and everybody" is welcome, Messer said, adding

there is no registration for attendees.

Trained counselors will be available at the conference to talk to those who make decisions for Christ. "Follow-up is one of our main emphases," Messer said, noting that area churches will have the opportunity to conduct follow-up with those who make decisions.

Messer's hope for the Bible & Evangelism Conference is that God's people would become disciples and that churches would join hands and hearts together in telling the world about Jesus.

Conference speakers for Monday-Thursday, 6 p.m. nightly at the church will be:

► Monday — Emir Caner

► Tuesday — Tommy Green, pastor of First Baptist Church, Brandon, Fla.

► Wednesday — Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C., and evangelist Junior Hill

► Thursday — Evangelist Bob Pitman

In addition, lunches Monday-Thursday will be offered at the following churches beginning at 11:20 a.m. with music and speaking:

► Monday — First Baptist Church, St. Elmo, with speaker Emir Caner

► Tuesday — Bayou Sara Baptist Church, Saraland, with speaker Tommy Green

► Wednesday — Highpoint Baptist Church, Eight Mile, with speaker Lemuel Taylor, pastor emeritus of Highpoint Baptist

► Thursday — First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, with speaker Jim Coldiron, evangelist

Special music for the Bible & Evangelism Conference will be provided by worship leader Phil Willis and Sons of The Father from West Frankfort, Ill. There also will be a children's program for the Sunday-Thursday evening services with Perry Robbins.

For more information about the conference, visit www.james-messer.com.



MESSER



HILL



Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.

1 John 4:11-13



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— Bro. Justin Salter
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About Alabama

Alabama's High School Graduation Rate

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

In January the U.S. Department of Education released estimates of the high school graduation rate for all 50 states. These estimates, based on information reported by state education agencies, showed that the percentage of Alabama students who graduate from high school on time continues to increase but remains below the national average.

A milestone

High school graduation is an important milestone for individuals, and it is a key to the economic development of states as well. The Census Bureau estimates that, on average, a high school graduate earned about \$10,000 a year more than a dropout in 2009. States with large percentages of high school dropouts inevitably have relatively low per-capita income.

For example, in 2009 Alabama's rank among the 50 states was 46 on the percentage of adults with a high school diploma and 42 on per-capita income.

Increasing the high school graduation rate will make the state more attractive and improve the economic well-being of its residents.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 43,166 students graduated from Alabama's public high schools in the 2010 school year. Four years earlier, an estimated 60,080 students had been enrolled as first-time ninth grad-

ers. The graduation rate, based on these figures, was 71.8 percent.

The national graduation rate, calculated in the same way, was 78.2 percent. Only six states had graduation rates lower than Alabama's — Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada and South Carolina. It is noticeable that five of these were southeastern states. Our only neighbor with a high graduation rate was Tennessee, which graduated an estimated 80.4 percent of its students on time.

White students in Alabama graduated at a rate of 75.8 percent, compared to a national average of 83.0 percent for that subgroup. Black students graduated at a rate of 65.4 percent, compared to a national average of 66.1 percent for that subgroup.

While Alabama's graduation rate remains low, the state is gaining ground. The percentage of graduates has increased every year since 2003, and the gap between Alabama and the national average has shrunk from 12 to eight percentage points over that time.

The economic future of Alabama depends to a large degree on the success of our schools in producing graduates who are prepared for higher education and the world of work.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at jwillia@samford.edu.

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CHRIST: GREATEST COACH IN HISTORY

By Dan Wood
National Christian College
Athletic Association

Athletes benefit from attending, playing for Christian colleges, universities

What is a student-athlete? Why is there a need to further describe a student that chooses to play interscholastic or intercollegiate athletics? We do not tend to see students who

participate in the science club or on a debate team as student-scientists or student-orators.

The answer lies in our culture's promotion of sport participants to a level of recognition not given to other extracurricular activity team members. From kids

to collegians, we loudly applaud those who can run faster, throw harder, jump higher and triumph over their opponents in sports.

Ideally the term student-athlete describes an individual who is enrolled in a course of study and has chosen to participate in sports. Student-athletes should be the leading examples of how to benefit from the "out-of-the-classroom" education opportunities offered by today's educational system. Lessons that are best learned outside lecture halls, laboratories and computer terminals are part of the core mission of all institutions of higher education.

Today's Christian colleges are becoming more adept at recruiting and retaining the student-athlete. They have found that their mission to assist students in developing a Christian worldview can sometimes be best taught in



Photo by Bill Mathews

Melia Graffiti, of Panama City, Fla., runs the bases for Judson College during a softball game against Marion Military Institute.

the ebb and flow of competitive athletics. Member schools of the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) report that more than 20 percent of their students participate in intercollegiate athletics. The oppor-

tunities to succeed and fail, win and lose, and practice to perfection are taught throughout Scripture. When one can view Christ and His disciples as a team under the guidance of the greatest coach in history, then the life applications available in athletics are endless. There is the recruiting process where Christ offered no enticements to the fishermen, the doctor or the tax collector. He simply asked them to come and they did. Then you have the three years of training where Christ — the coach — demonstrated and modeled the attributes that His recruits would need to succeed. It all comes together in the "pep talk" at the Last Supper. Has any coach in history ever motivated a team to accomplish more than what Christ's disciples did? How many players have given their lives for the cause the coach put before them?

(See 'Christian,' page 10)

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CHRISTIAN COACH CAN PROVIDE SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT

(continued from page 9)
 Christian college coaches place the spiritual development of their student-athletes ahead of everything else. They direct, guide and require that their players take

advantage of the vast array of worship and outreach opportunities within their campus community. Many coaches plan sports ministry trips in conjunction with their pre-season training. These trips blend

preparation for the upcoming season with preparation for life both here and for eternity. Christian institutions of higher education are now fielding teams at all levels — National Collegiate

Athletic Associate, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and NCCAA — that are nationally competitive. Athletic facilities that once were poorer than those of most high schools have been upgraded or new facilities built in an effort to attract top Christian prospects. These facilities — which also benefit the entire campus community as wellness centers and recreational areas — are incorporated and become value-added considerations for general recruitment.

Add in the rapidly improving quality and experience of Christian college coaches in all sports and you have an ideal setting for the full potential of the student and the athlete to be reached. Today's coaches know the demands of their sport must be balanced for the whole well-being of their players. For the Christian college coach, this means meeting the spiritual, academic and athletic needs of each player. A national champion-

ship is not the greatest goal for these coaches unless it comes as a byproduct of developing stronger Christian young men or women who are progressing toward a degree in their chosen field of study.

One of the greatest benefits of the student-athlete choosing a Christian college or university is that the normally reduced size of the student body brings more opportunity for leadership skills to be developed. As a team captain, a resident hall assistant or a member of a ministry team, Christian college students can take advantage of these "hands-on laboratories" to see how they perform when called upon.



Photo by Caroline Summers

Sophomore Jacquiski Tartt, of Mobile, plays defensive back for Samford University during a game against The Citadel.

For the parents or financial provider, the Christian college myth that there are no athletic scholarships available is far from the truth. Depending on the institution's athletic affiliation, scholarships can be as much as full tuition. Many institutions have no limit on how much institutional aid a recruit can receive (up to the total

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Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

Men's basketball head coach and athletic director Joe Niland (right) of the University of Mobile talks with player Brandon Morris, of Sorrento, La., during a game against its cross-town rival, Spring Hill College.

cost of one year annually) so combining academic, leadership or athletic aid is an option.

The Christian college student-athlete has never had more outstanding choices than today. Finding the right school that God would have you attend may seem quite challenging, but He has provided plenty of space for you. It should be a matter of being carefully committed to prayer.

For more information on Christian colleges, check out the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities, the National

Christian College Athletic Association and the Association for Biblical Higher Education.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article was reprinted with permis-

sion from Dan Wood, executive director of the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) and a former coach for NAIA and NCCAA member institutions.

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Want to know God?

By Pastor Joey Cannady
Solitude Baptist Church, Albertville

One thing that is vital to helping anyone truly know God is godly encouragement. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Paul instructs his readers, "Therefore, encourage one another and build up one another just as you are doing." Paul knew the value of, and understood the need for, encouragement.

Encouragement means "to help put strength into," and we have the opportunity to do just that with the words we share with others. Paul instructed the church at Thessalonica to encourage one another by being ready, being different and being confident.

We are to be ready for the Day of the Lord. Accepting Christ as our Savior and receiving His forgiveness can assure us we are ready for that day. I encourage you not only to be ready for the Day of the Lord, but ready to offer a word of encouragement to others. Take advantage of the opportunities to add strength to the weary.

We also are instructed to be different. "We are not of the darkness, but of the light." This light of hope sets us apart and we should encourage others to live in that light. We should live differently because of who we are — children of God. Show you are a child of God by offering encouragement to others on a daily basis. Others need it more than you realize, and you may prove to be the only light in their day.

Paul also encouraged them to be confident. As children of God we are possessed with great confidence because our sins have been forgiven and we've been given the gift of eternal life. When you encounter people dealing with uncertainties, encourage them to be confident in the goodness of God.

My life experience has taught me that the more I offer encouragement to others — the more I speak to them about being ready, being different and being confident — the more encouraged I am. If you are in need of some encouragement in your life, let me offer this piece of advice: be encouraged by offering encouragement to others. It will change your day for the better and it just may change someone else's life for eternity.

CAMPUS News

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Alabama Women's Hall of Fame to Induct Two Notable Women:** Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) and Frances Cabaniss Roberts (1916–2000) will be inducted into the Alabama Women's

Hall of Fame (AWHOF) at its annual induction ceremony March 7.

Unsuccessful as a writer while living, Hurston died in poverty and obscurity in 1960. She was buried in an unmarked grave and would have been forgotten had not Alice Walker, author of "The Color Purple," helped revive her writings. Hurston's writings, all in print

today, are now taught in schools across the country.

Roberts was a founding faculty member of the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Much of her life was spent as an activist for the preservation and continued use of historical buildings. She was the driving force behind the Old Town and Twickenham historical districts, Huntsville's Constitution Hall Village, the Huntsville Historical Society and the

Huntsville Preservation Society. The event will be at 10:30 a.m. in the Alumnae Auditorium at Judson College.

To participate in the AWHOF luncheon following the induction, contact the Judson office of development at 334-683-5109.

► **Ninth Annual Old Howard 100 Bike Ride Scheduled for April:** The 9th annual Old Howard 100 bike ride through Alabama's Black Belt will be April 20 begin-



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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Hackleburg, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a pastor to lead this conservative small-town church of 300 members. A bachelor's degree from a Baptist college or seminary degree is preferred. Send resumés to: First Baptist Church, Hackleburg, P.O. Box 128, Hackleburg, AL 35564, or email to: hfbcoffice@gmail.com by March 31.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Bethel Baptist Church in Brent, Ala., is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Bethel Baptist Church, Mr. Danny Russell, 298 Tabernacle Road, Brent, AL 35034.

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 resumés to: glwalker20@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Pineywood Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational minister of music. Send resumés to: 498 Pineywood Road, Gardendale, AL 35071 or office@pineywoodonline.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 resumés to: peejinx@bellsouth.net, or mail to: Worship Search Team, 4607 Co. Rd. 1545, Cullman, AL 35058.

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

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

PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER: Cahaba View Baptist, Leeds, is seeking a part-time student minister to lead and minister to our students. Send contact information or resumés to: Neal Bruce, pastor, at cahabaviewbc@gmail.com, or 1441 W. Riverview Road, Trussville, AL 35173.

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 resumés via email to: jjames@concordbaptist.com, or by regular mail to: Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621. ATTN: Dr. Don Cox.

TWO POSITIONS AVAILABLE: Dwight Baptist in Gadsden is prayerfully receiving resumés for two vital ministries of the church — full-time minister of youth and part-time minister of music. Please send resumés to: jaystewart@comcast.net or call 256-546-2847.

TWO POSITIONS NEEDED: East Side Baptist Church in Cullman, Ala., is seeking a part-time music director. A pianist is also needed. Please

respond by March 22. eastsidebaptist@bellsouth.net or 256-734-6144.

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.

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

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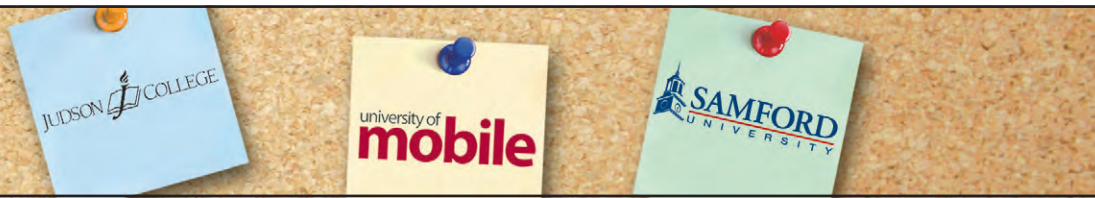
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ning at 9 a.m. The ride will begin and conclude on the campus of Judson College in Marion.

The Old Howard 100 is a ride through three counties sponsored by Samford University's Howard College of Arts and Sciences. This year's route will include Selma, with the final rest stop at the Selma Public Library.

Proceeds from the ride will benefit Sowing Seeds of Hope, an interfaith initiative that seeks to improve the quality of life and work in Perry County.

Routes of approximately 34, 43, 75 and 101 miles are available and are fully supported with five support and gear stops at historic sites.

Additional information is available at howard.samford.edu/old-howard.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Upper Room Theater Presents 'Godspell' March 1-3:** The Upper Room Theater at the University of Mobile will present the musical "Godspell" at the Saraland Center for Performing Arts at Saraland

High School on March 1-2 at 7 p.m. and March 3 at 2 p.m.

Directed by Bruce Earnest, assistant dean of the UMobile School of Worship Leadership and the Center for Performing Arts/School of Music, "Godspell" is a musical by Stephen Schwartz based on the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

Including hit songs "Day by Day," "Prepare Ye the Day of the Lord" and "By My Side," this musical reflects on the life of Jesus, with a message of kindness, tolerance and love.

For more information, visit the website at www.umobile.edu or call 1-800-WIN-RAMS or 251-442-2222.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford University's Wright Center Presents Series Continues:** Co-presented with Samford University's Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education and Professional Studies, the March 25 show is titled "Garrison Keillor: A Brand-New Retrospective." It is part of the annual Tom

and Marla Corts Distinguished Authors Series and will start at 7 p.m.

The Keillor program is described as "A man at 70 relives the good times — and the music that brings it all back: hymns, jingles, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, pop tunes, limericks, rock 'n roll, Beethoven, love sonnets, rags, blues, rousers, with Richard Dvorsky, Rob Fisher and Christine DiGiallonardo."

While it will not be a broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion," it will include some of the regular performers from his radio program.

Keillor has been honored with Grammy, ACE and George Foster Peabody awards and the National Humanities Medal.

For ticket information, call 205-726-2853, visit www.samford.edu/wrightcenter or go to the Samford Arts Box Office in Swearingin Hall.



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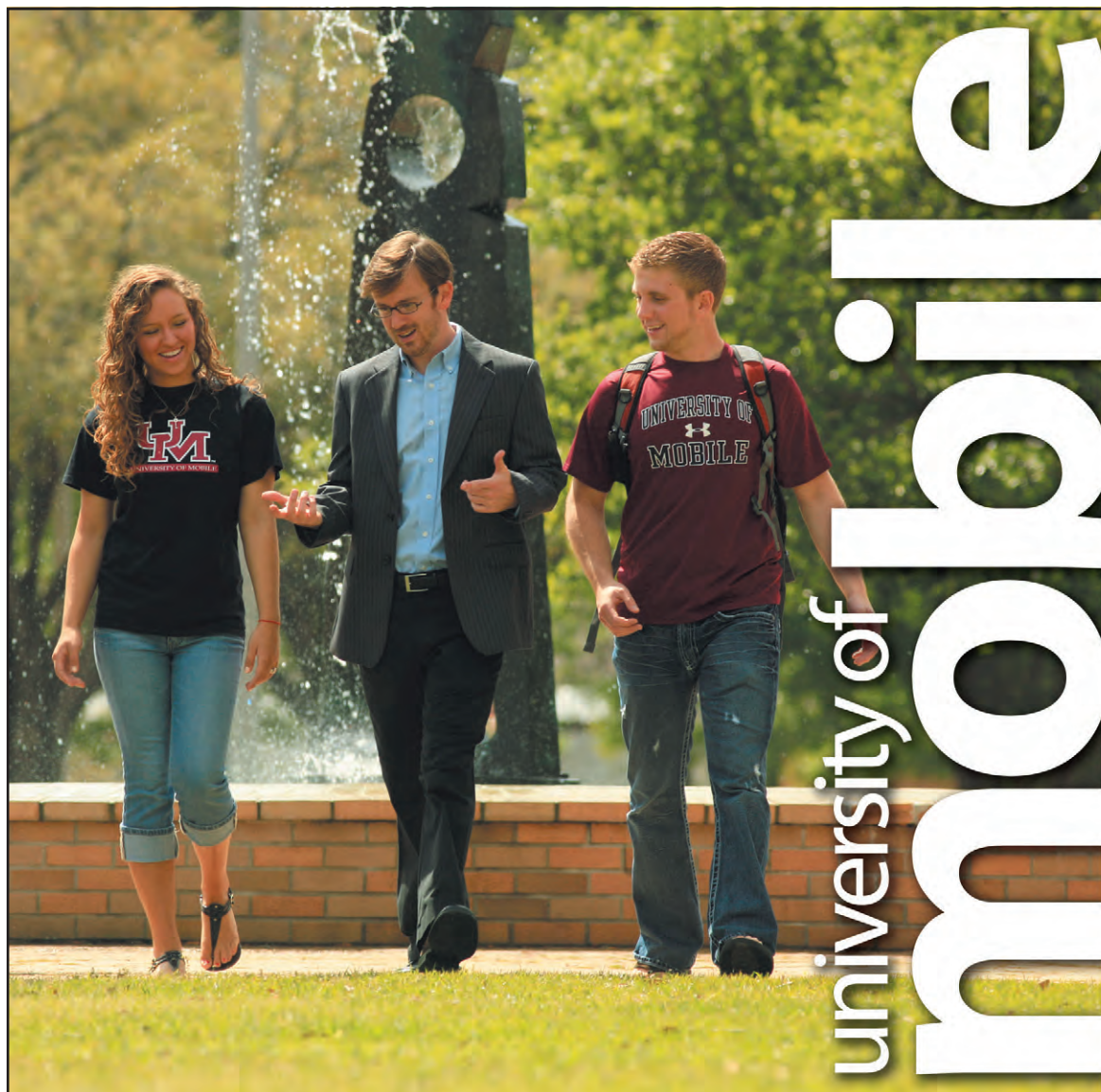
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 24

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

PURSUING THOSE WHO NEED TO HEAR Jonah 3:1-5, 10; 4:1-11

All People Have an Urgent Need (3:1-4)

After being vomited out of the fish, God spoke to Jonah again, telling him to go to Nineveh to bring a message of divine judgment to the people in that city.

Finally at this point in the book Jonah is obedient. It is important to realize that even if we disagree with God or do not want to do what God commands, we are to be obedient. Unfortunately, it is easy to disregard God's message to us and we can rationalize our disobedience. We can tell ourselves that we should not tell others about Christ because they may think we are strange or because we are too busy. We may refuse to go overseas to spread the gospel because it would hinder our retirement plans or make us quit our secure job. But if we truly trust God, we know that He provides for us and that it is more important to trust God than to listen to others or even to our own family. Following Jesus requires complete obedience.

God Acts with Sovereign Mercy (3:5, 10)

When the people of Nineveh heard the message, they repented and God had mercy on them. Just as God showed mercy to the Ninevites, He still shows mercy to us today. This is most evident in the salvation we have in Christ. Because of the mercy God has shown us, we ought to have mercy on others and share the gospel with them. Because so many people in foreign countries have never heard the gospel, it is important for Christians to be involved in foreign missions, going overseas or supporting missionaries financially and/or through prayer.

Salvation Isn't Just About Us (4:1-4)

This section shows a drastic flaw in Jonah's thinking. Jonah was correct in knowing that God would show mercy. But instead of delighting in the repentance of

the Ninevites, he was angry. Why should Jonah be angry at this news? It seems he should rejoice, but these were the enemies of the Israelites. Instead of seeing these people saved, he would have rather seen God punish them for their wickedness. But what Jonah failed to realize is that we all deserve to be punished by God. Each of us is guilty of sinning against a holy and righteous God. Instead of wanting to see God destroy our enemies, we should want to see them accept Christ and turn from their sin. This is evident in the story Jesus tells about the ungrateful servant in Matthew 18:21-35. In that parable, a servant is forgiven a mighty debt after he pleads for mercy, but then he chokes a servant who owes him a small amount of money. This ungrateful servant is then punished for his lack of mercy. For those of us who have accepted the gift of salvation in Christ, we ought to be merciful to others since God has shown us mercy. Instead of looking down on people who are deserving of punishment or who deserve their fate, we need to remember that we were once lost as well and that God showed us mercy when we did not deserve it.

Do We Care as God Cares? (4:5-11)

As Jonah sat and waited to see what would happen to the city of Nineveh, God caused a plant to provide him with shade. Jonah enjoyed the plant because of its shade, but the next day God caused a worm to kill the plant. This made Jonah angry, and the heat made him want to die. God confronted Jonah, who was angry about the plant dying, and chastised Jonah for being more concerned about a plant than about an entire city.

Many of us, like Jonah, become angry over frivolous things like our clothing and possessions rather than being concerned with the eternal destiny of our neighbors. Many Christians need to rethink what it means to be a follower of Christ in the United States, where people have so much and are often concerned about getting more. Following Christ means putting His desires over ours.

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

THE REWARD OF ENDURANCE 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Most folks do not choose to think about their own mortality until life situations force them to. A good example of this is the relatively small number of adults who indicate they have wills. Many persons mistakenly think their estates are too small to need wills. Good stewards know they are essential legal documents in this day and time. Simplifying the legal issues related to the transfer of an estate is but one benefit. The opportunity to communicate one's final requests and preferences may be even more important.

The focal passage in this week's lesson can be read as if it was Paul's last will and testament to his friend and ministry colleague, Timothy.

Paul's situation changed over the years since the earlier letter to Timothy. By the time of this letter, Paul knew his life was nearing the end (2 Tim. 4:6). His words to Timothy were likely received as important final instructions from a caring, concerned mentor and friend. Because of this, Timothy most likely took quite seriously the requests and instructions outlined in the letter.

We need to recognize that Paul's words are just as relevant for us today as they were when Timothy read them. And we should take them just as seriously as did Timothy.

An Enduring Message (1-2)

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1), Paul instructed Timothy. Another way to render the text is "be continually empowered by the grace in Christ." The experience of God's grace in our lives can be empowering. Grace allows us to know release from regret we feel due to sin and disobedience. Grace allows us to be content — but not complacent — with our life situation, whatever it may be. Grace gives us the ability to remain hopeful in all circumstances. The experience of God's

grace, as it comes to each of us in so many different ways, can be potent fuel to power the kind of gospel living modeled by Jesus. With this kind of empowerment, surely we can demonstrate enduring faithfulness to the cause of Christ.

Examples of Endurance (3-10)

What if the Gallup Organization conducted a survey to answer the question, "Do you like to suffer?" We would be surprised if anyone answered "yes." Yet Paul instructed Timothy to share in suffering. He did not instruct him to avoid suffering.

What does this mean for us? After all, who really wants to suffer?

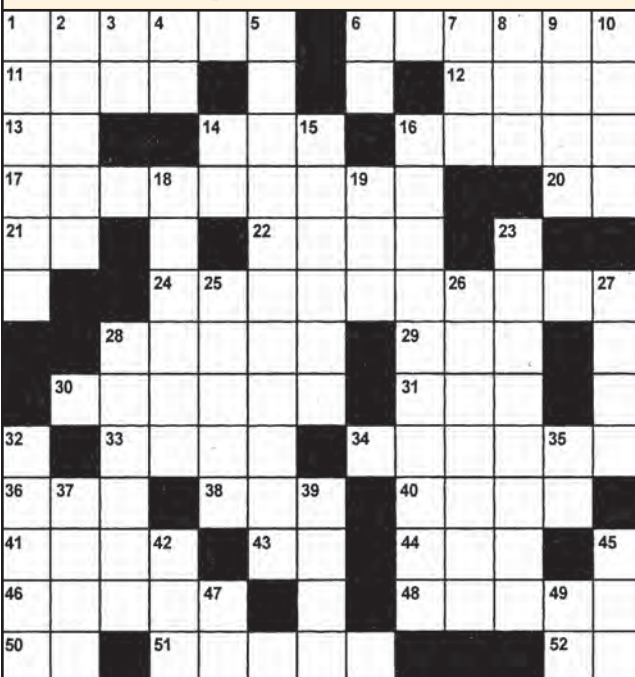
Accepting suffering that comes our way can be an occasion to demonstrate faith and trust. Suffering creates opportunities to encounter God in new ways as we move through the pain or anxiety or brokenness that causes us to suffer. Plus, when we share in the sufferings of others we demonstrate the kind of Christian community Jesus modeled. We help one another. Paul told the Church in Philippi he wanted to know Christ and "share in the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). To know Christ is to know suffering. However, Paul's suffering was not done in a passive way. He did not resign himself to hopelessness in the face of impending death. Rather, he knew his sufferings — past and present — were accomplished through grace and hope. For Paul, endurance was not a grim acceptance of bleak realities. It was hopeful patience in the midst of suffering while eagerly anticipating the kingdom of God in its fullness.

Enduring Promises (11-13)

Paul's final trustworthy saying is a powerful encouragement to all seeking to live for Christ. We are called to endure suffering and the impact of evil all around us with hopeful patience, not grim acceptance. God will be faithful. The Kingdom of light will one day come in fullness. In the meantime we live grace-empowered lives.

Christian Crossword

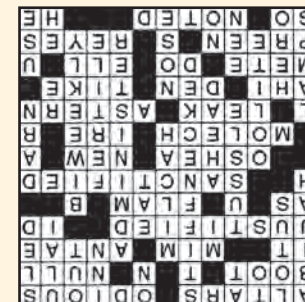
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Across

- Your _____ shall be desolate. (Ezek. 6:4)
- They had made themselves _____ to David. (1 Chron. 19:6)
- Overshoe.
- _____ and void.
- Lose his life for my sake shall find _____. (Matt. 16:25)
- Affectedly shy.
- Thicker parts at ends of side walls.
- Being _____ freely by his grace. (Rom. 3:24)
- _____, ego, superego.
- _____ for me and my house. (Josh. 24:15)
- Hoax.
- Being _____ by the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 15:16)
- _____ the son of Nun. (Num. 13:8)
- Behold, all things are become _____. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Pass through the fire to

- _____. (2 Kings 23:10)
 - Anger.
 - Crack in a container.
 - Behind a vessel.
 - _____ the son of Abdiel. (1 Chron. 5:15)
 - A _____ of dragons. (Jer. 9:11)
 - Child.
 - With the same measure that ye _____. (Luke 6:38)
 - I _____ set my bow in the cloud. (Gen. 9:13)
 - Wing of building.
 - Primp.
 - _____ Syndrome.
 - For God _____ loved the world. (John 3:16)
 - Which is _____ in the Scripture. (Dan. 10:21)
 - _____ gave His only begotten Son. (John 3:16)
- ### Down
- _____ the son of Jeroboam. (1 Kings 14:1)
 - Aquatic plant.
 - Light _____ rule the day. (Gen. 1:16)
 - I stand _____ the door. (Rev. 3:20)
 - Behold, it is a _____ people. (Ex. 32:9)
 - Potipherah priest of _____. (Gen. 46:20)
 - No room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
 - There went _____ a decree from Caesar Augustus. (Luke 2:1)
 - I was by the river of _____. (Dan. 8:2)
 - Winter coasting vehicle.
 - Third note of musical scale.
 - Nahor's wife. (Gen. 11:29)
 - Have charge of, manage.
 - Scuffle.
 - They did all _____, and were filled. (Matt. 14:20)
 - Every 14 days.
 - Yet to come.
 - Able to reproduce.
 - Mend a stocking.
 - Limestone.
 - There were seven _____ of fire. (Rev. 4:5)
 - Second note of musical scale.
 - Great man.
 - I will not put my hook in thy _____. (2 Kings 19:28)
 - Even (contraction).
 - When ye pray, _____ not vain repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)
 - Thy servants have _____ pasture. (Gen. 47:4)
 - What?



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature

Sound Bites By Rick Sharp



NORTH POINT INSIDEOUT

No One Higher
North Point Music

North Point InsideOut is the student ministry musical arm of North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Ga. Like all of the North Point Music family, their InsideOut label is high-energy, excellently performed praise and worship music aimed at younger audiences. Supported by their multiple Dove Award-winning and Grammy-nominated staff, InsideOut is some of the best contemporary Christian music around for the college-aged crowd. Cutting-edge, scripturally sound and fun, InsideOut continues the musical excellence of the entire North Point Music family. Many may disagree, but I believe this is how we win the current young adult crowd to service for our God. Man. Great stuff.

"No One Higher" is the first live performance CD for the InsideOut ministry. It was recorded at The Walk, a youth event attended by thousands. The title cut "No One Higher" is the pinnacle of the record, even though the entire album is chillingly good.



I admit to loving good music just for its intrinsic value, but "No One Higher" is godly, theologically sound praise that people of all ages could embrace.

Wow.

CHERI KEAGGY

So I Can Tell
Cheri Keaggy / Psalm 91 Records

Three-time Dove Award-winning Cheri Keaggy released her eighth album, "So I Can Tell," to much fanfare. With nine No. 1 songs to her credit, guidance from the legendary Phil Keaggy, and production from Scott Dente and Ken Lewis, there was no way that this record could be anything but great.

The title cut, the album's first radio single, showcases Keaggy's plaintive vocals and honest, down-home lyrics. Searingly honest writing across the entire album makes you believe that Keaggy is pouring out her heart only to you, the listener, and to God. With a consistent feel of old-time gospel, mixed with a thoroughly modern musical vehicle, Keaggy's new record delights on many levels and will appeal to many musical tastes.



For you guitar aficionados (I confess), Gospel Music Hall of Famer and legendary guitarist Phil Keaggy finishes the album with the beautiful finger-style guitar ballad "Postlude: Invitation to Hope." What a marvelous end to a great album.

PERRY LAHAIE

Ahead
Frontier

Frontier recording artist Perry LaHaie, well-known morning talk show host on Moody Radio in Michigan, is preparing to release his sophomore music project "Ahead."



This follows his 2008 release "Endless Fields."

LaHaie also is host of the nationally syndicated radio feature "Cast Yourself In," a program documenting how God is working in the Muslim world.

With "Ahead," LaHaie has stepped into a stronger authoring role, co-writing seven of the 11 songs on the new record. Grammy-winning engineer and producer Andy Hunt leads the project, mostly guitar-driven radio-friendly pop/rock.

The record's title track employs

an easy rock feel and underscores the raw dependence on God required for living by faith and the need for moving forward one step at a time. LaHaie said this theme — going as far as one can see, then waiting for more light — is what this new album is about.

There is good music here, uplifting and spiritually sound. LaHaie's fans will certainly be pleased after nearly five years since his last record, and LaHaie's growing songwriting skills should win a lot of new converts.

HEARTS OF SAINTS

For All of Us
New Day Christian Distributors

Nashville pop/rock band Hearts of Saints released their two-disc sophomore offering, "For All of Us," on Jan. 15. Included are a rock disc and a worship disc, a move designed to highlight the band's talents both as high-energy stage

rockers banging out heavy anthems and as worship leaders producing Scripture-heavy music suitable for congregational singing.

Hearts of Saints' first record, released in 2010, received a lot of notice and led to their sharing the stage at Christian music festivals with the likes of Switchfoot, TobyMac,

Skillet and Casting Crowns.

The project's first radio single "Merciful God" from the worship disc was written after a missions trip to Haiti. The band was struck by the devastating poverty, yet amazed by the joy of the people. The song came from the realization that only hope and trust in God's goodness and mercy could explain the joy they saw.



Book Reviews By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Conversations in Heaven: The Amazing Journey of Five Unique Heavenly Beings

Sue Campbell. Bloomington, Ind.: WestBow Press, 2012. 266 pp. (Paperback).

Five unique heavenly beings? I was pretty skeptical of this book at first. Would it be a fantasy? Would it be simply weird? As it turned out, it was not weird at all, and not what I would describe as a fantasy, although much of it came from someone's imagination.

The book details the lives of five people who become heavenly beings after their deaths and are put in a group together to make the journey through heaven. The book is full of well-defined characters and vividly described scenes and settings. The author is able to pull the reader into the action, evoking atmosphere masterfully.

I kept looking for the point to

the book, but never really found one. I am a huge fan of good fiction, but settings and characters are not enough.

The book has a promising premise — five people die and go to heaven — but I never found a solid plot.

Breakfast with Bonhoeffer: How I Learned to Stop Being Religious So I Could Follow Jesus

Jon Walker. Abilene, Texas: Leafwood Publishers, 2012. 202 pp. (Paperback).

My pastor is a big fan of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and I am slowly becoming one, too, although I find Bonhoeffer's writing difficult. For one thing, his writing tends to be ponderous, dated and hard to read. More importantly, Bonhoeffer is difficult because he is hard on himself and therefore hard on the reader.

When I read that Jon Walker's

new book was an attempt to interpret Bonhoeffer's work for modern-day Christians on a personal level, I couldn't wait to read it, expecting a kind of "Bonhoeffer for Dummies."

The author applied Bonhoeffer's teachings to his own life, which included job loss, financial disaster and a heart-rending divorce. Through the devastating events he endured, Walker doggedly followed Jesus' example. Instead of being angry, he forgave — but it wasn't an easy, Pollyanna-like forgiveness. It was the gritty, painful kind of forgiveness that screams its way out from the very soul of the forgiver.

This book was still a hard read for me, but not because of the writing style; Walker is engaging and witty, an exceptional writer. My difficulty came from Walker's affirmation of the clear and unvarnished demands of a discipleship that leaves little wiggle room — just like Bonhoeffer's.

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. *The Harbinger*, Jonathan Cahn (Charisma Media)
2. *Cross Roads*, William Paul Young (FaithWords)
3. *The Bridge*, Karen Kingsbury (Howard Books)
4. *Full Disclosure*, Dee Henderson (Baker)
5. *The Shack*, William Paul Young (Windblown Media)
6. *Redeeming Love*, Francine Rivers (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
7. *A Patchwork Christmas Collection*, Judith Miller, Nancy Moser, Stephanie Grace Whitson (Barbour)
8. *The Bridesmaid*, Home to Hickory Hollow Series #2, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
9. *Tidewater Inn*, Hope Beach Series #1, Colleen Coble (Thomas Nelson)
10. *Coming Home*, Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)

Nonfiction

1. *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. *Jesus Lives*, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. *Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition*, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. *Not a Fan*, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)
5. *Grace for the Moment*, Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)
6. *Jesus Today*, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
7. *Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition*, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. *Heaven Is for Real*, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
9. *Daily Wisdom for Women*, Barbour Publishing, Inc. (Barbour)
10. *I Declare*, Joel Osteen (FaithWords)



BP photo

Ross Hardy, founder of the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team, says God has placed him and his fellow chaplains at the white cliffs on the southeast coast of England 'to rescue people's lives.'

'God's prompting'

Chaplains rescue jumpers from suicide in England

For eight years Ross Hardy has walked the white chalk cliffs of Beachy Head, England, among the thousands who travel there from around the world. Many come to take pictures.

But some come to die. And by God's grace and a keen eye, Hardy usually can tell the difference.

"We are trained in certain signs, to infer things from people's behavior," Hardy said. "But many times it is nothing but God's prompting that makes us know who to go talk to in a crowd of people standing near the edge."

The "us" is the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team, a ministry begun by Hardy, a former Baptist pastor. The ministry now encompasses 14 trained chaplains who patrol the cliffs and are on call 24/7 for people in need of help.

It's not easy work, Hardy said. He's seen people jump, and he has a fear of heights. He and other chaplains sometimes have to dangle over the edge with a harness. They sit still for hours in the freezing wind and rain to talk to someone. And they all face constant emotional exhaustion.

Vision from God

But Hardy said the team keeps going for two reasons — a vision from God and dismal numbers.

Beachy Head, on the southeast coast of England, consistently ranks in the top four on many lists of the world's most frequented suicide destinations, along with the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco; Aokigahara forest at the base of Mount Fuji, Japan; and Niagara Falls in New York.

Hardy isn't too excited about that.

But there are other numbers he's happier about — after face-to-face contact and communication with a chaplain, 99 percent of the suicidal people they meet choose to come away from the edge. Since 2004, the team has rescued about 1,750 people.

"It's very rewarding, invigorating work. We may talk to between two and 14 people in a week," Hardy said.

The chaplains aren't all ministers — they're just followers of Christ who responded to the need to

help others, Hardy said. They're dance teachers, firefighters, builders, doctors and journalists. They're Baptist, Anglican and from several other Christian denominations.

"God has placed us here to rescue people's lives. It's terribly sad to see so many broken lives, but we get the opportunity to speak with them and let them talk, and we listen without judging," he said. "Their situations don't stop us from loving them."

As the recession drags on, the level of crisis deepens for people, he said. Some come because they've lost a job, committed a crime, had a breakup or simply aren't happy.

"Some have planned it for months. We talked with one man who had flown all the way here from Switzerland," Hardy said. "Others have only been thinking of suicide for a few hours and something just caused them to break and make a quick decision to end their life."

That was the way it was for the first man Hardy encountered in 2004, only 40 minutes into his very first shift. The man was walking up the side path toward the cliff, and something about him caught the attention of Hardy and another chaplain.

"We couldn't get him out of our heads, so we went back and found him sitting on the edge in a spot hidden from view," Hardy said. "He wasn't particularly impressed that we'd shown up, which is what often happens at first. Most think it's their choice and don't want us to interfere."

But as Hardy talked with the man and helped him explore his doubts, he agreed to come back to the chaplaincy hut, have a cup of tea and talk about it more. "We saw his hopelessness. He had a lot of gambling debt and didn't know how to move on."

Hardy shared the gospel with him and he professed faith in Christ that night. Six months later, he came back and asked if he could help with the ministry. "It's so amazing how, through the grace of God, we get to be one thing in a chain of events to see lives dramatically transformed," Hardy said.

For more information about the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team, visit bhct.org.uk. (BP)

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

U.S. House passes disaster aid for churches bill

WASHINGTON — The Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act of 2013, HR 592, was debated on the House floor and passed Feb. 13.

With 354 "yes" votes, the bill, taken under a procedure called "suspension of the rules," well surpassed the 2/3rds majority needed to pass. HR 592 authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to issue direct grants to churches and other religious institutions damaged October 2012 by Superstorm Sandy.

Co-sponsored by Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) and Rep. Grace Meng (D-N.Y.), HR 592 allows for houses of worship to qualify for FEMA grants available to other nonprofits like museums, zoos and performing-arts centers that provide essential services "of a governmental nature" to the general public.

According to media reports, more than 200 houses of worship damaged in Superstorm Sandy have applied for FEMA aid.

Opponents to the bill, like Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU), had sent a letter Feb. 12 urging members of the U.S. House of Representatives to oppose HR 592. Barry Lynn, executive director of AU, argued that taxpayers should not be forced to pay for reconstruction of buildings used primarily for worship.

Lutheran pastor apologizes for praying at Newtown vigil

NEWTOWN, Conn. — A Lutheran pastor in Newtown, Conn., has apologized after being reprimanded for participating in an interfaith vigil following the shooting massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Rob Morris, pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church, prayed at the vigil the Sunday following the Dec. 14 shootings alongside other Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Baha'i clergy.

Morris' church is a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). The denomination's constitution prohibits ministers from participating in services with members of different faiths.

LCMS President Matthew Harrison wrote in a letter to the Synod that "the presence of prayers and religious readings" made the Newtown vigil joint worship and therefore off-limits to Missouri Synod ministers. Harrison said Morris' participation also offended members of the denomination.

"After consultation with my supervisors and others, I made my own decision," Morris wrote in his apology letter. "I believed my participation to be, not an act of joint worship, but an act of community chaplaincy."

Court issues 11th injunction against abortion mandate

ST. PAUL — An appeals court has blocked enforcement of the Obama administration's abortion/contraceptive mandate against a Minnesota business, marking the 11th win by businesses or organizations against the controversial federal policy.

The mandate forces businesses to carry insurance that covers contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs, such as Plan B.

The issue likely will be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court, but so far the opponents of the policy are winning. Of the 14 cases involving for-profits that have been decided, opponents have won injunctions in 11 cases. Injunctions were denied in three cases, according to a tally by the Becket Fund for Religious Freedom.

The case likely is headed to the nation's highest court because appeals courts — the level directly below the Supreme Court — have issued split rulings. The Seventh and Eighth Circuits have issued injunctions against the mandate, while the Sixth and 10th Circuits have upheld it. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the government in December, although that order did not involve an injunction but instead an order requiring the government to issue new rules for nonprofits.

DuBois leaves faith-based post at White House

WASHINGTON — Longtime White House aide Joshua DuBois, who headed the White House office focused on the intersection of religion and public policy, stepped down Feb. 8.

President Obama asked DuBois to lead his White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships in 2009 when the Pentecostal reverend was 26. He hoped DuBois could sustain the ties he had helped forge between Obama and religious groups during the 2008 presidential campaign.

DuBois will teach at New York University starting later in the year, according to White House officials, and also plans to write a book based on the inspirational messages he sent to Obama daily. ☐