

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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# 'Open to

# all peoples'

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

## Alabama Baptists train, equip leaders as ethnic congregations rise in SBC

**A**s the number of ethnic churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) continues to grow, Alabama Baptists are training leaders to minister to under-reached people groups around the state.

Across the SBC, the number of churches identifying themselves by an ethnicity other than Anglo has increased from 6,044 congregations in 1998 to 10,049 congregations in 2011, according to the Annual Church Profile (ACP) compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources.

The largest jump in non-Anglo

SBC congregations from 1998 to 2011 has predominantly come from an 82.7 percent increase in the number of African-American congregations. Hispanic congregations have also seen a significant increase over the same span — nearly 63 percent. The number of Asian congregations affiliated with the SBC has grown by 55 percent.

"It's clear that Southern Baptists have been multi-ethnic and are becoming an even more multi-ethnic convention of churches," said Joseph Lee, senior pastor of Connexion Church, Lawrenceville, Ga., a mostly Korean Southern Baptist congregation.

These same groups are the focus of efforts in Alabama as well. According to Kristy Kennedy, state literacy missions coordinator for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planters are active in several areas of the state, including Birmingham, Dothan, Florence and Mobile.

(See 'Going,' page 11)

### Alabama for 2011

White people — **70.1%**

Black people — **26.5%**

People of Hispanic or Latino Origin — **4.0%**

People reporting two or more races — **1.4%**

Asian people — **1.2%**

American Indian and Alaska Native people — **0.7%**

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander people — **0.1%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: State and Country QuickFacts

# COMMENT

## A Threat to Religious Liberty

Since Feb. 28, Alabama's news media has been abuzz with stories about the state Legislature's passing a bill providing public tax credits for private and parochial schools. Unfortunately none of the stories have called attention to the fact that the bill violates the religious liberty of every Alabamian as set forth in the 1901 Alabama Constitution.

Most of the news stories focused instead on the charges and counter-charges by political heavyweights within the state.

Gov. Robert Bentley called the tax credit bill "the most significant piece of legislation that's been passed in this Legislature in years." Evidently his fellow Republicans agree because they have been bragging about how they used pure power to force the secretly rewritten bill about when to begin the school year into a bill providing tax credits to private and parochial schools.

So much for transparency in government.

On the other side, the Alabama Education Association (AEA) claims the procedures used to pass the bill violated the open meetings law as if AEA has not stooped to political tricks of its own when it was all-powerful in the state Legislature.

### Political overtones

Now the courts are in the fight. Circuit Judge Charles Price of Montgomery issued a restraining order preventing Gov. Bentley from signing the law. Republicans say the restraining order is political because Price is a Democrat. Republican legislative leaders Mike Hubbard, speaker of the House, and Del Marsh, president pro tem of the Senate, call Price's ruling "judicial activism at its worst." They want the Alabama Supreme Court, which is all Republican, to set Price's restraining order aside.

It is sad when even the rulings of the courts are tinged with political overtones rather than with confidence in unbiased justice, but that is another issue.

Surprisingly no one has talked about the violation of religious liberty that occurs when public tax dollars are channeled into church-related



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

causes. Article I, Section 3 of the Alabama Constitution is titled Religious Liberty and says, in part, "No one shall be compelled by law to attend any place of worship; nor to pay any tithes, taxes, or other rate for building or repairing any place of worship, or for maintaining any minister or ministry."

The words are clear — no taxes for maintaining a church-related ministry. Yet that is exactly what tax credits are. It is a dollar-for-dollar benefit from taxes owed the state. In this case, it is taxes that would have been used for public education that can be channeled to a church ministry — a parochial school.

Parochial schools exist as a way of inculcating the doctrines and beliefs of the sponsoring church body. That is why they require Bible classes, teach church doctrine and engage in worship according to the dictates of the sponsoring faith.

Yes, many parochial schools provide wonderful education. Personally, close family members attended and graduated from Christian schools in this state. But the quality of the education does not trump the inalienable right of religious liberty.

Baptists have long understood that to use public tax money to support a religious minis-

try is a violation of religious liberty. That principle is enshrined in the Alabama Constitution. It does not matter if the religious ministry is sponsored by Baptists or Presbyterians or Catholics or Seventh-day Adventists or whomever. Public tax money should not flow to religious ministries. Yet that is exactly what the Alabama Legislature has approved and the governor is eager to sign.

One legal scholar recently illustrated the impact of tax credits by using the example of crucifixes. "Assume a state wishes to subsidize the ownership of crucifixes," wrote U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan. She explained that a state could purchase them in bulk and distribute them; it could reimburse buyers with a check; or it could pay with a tax credit.

In all three cases, the state would be advancing a policy of supporting religion with public money and that is a violation of religious liberty. Tax credits to parochial schools are nothing more than what one writer called a "silly distinction" to allow government to use its taxing power to support religious ministries.

That this point was never raised in the debate in Montgomery or in the state's news media is both surprising and disappointing.

Unfortunately it is likely that nothing can be done about the Legislature's action. A U.S. Supreme Court case titled Arizona Christian School Tuition

Organization v. Winn effectively eliminated the ability of citizens to challenge tax credit schemes by eliminating taxpayer standing to bring cases. Now a state legislature can avoid a constitutional challenge simply by using tax credits instead of a direct appropriation. That is what the Alabama Legislature did.

A technical point about legal methodology prevents an examination about the legal merits of the case. That is unfortunate.

If the bill is allowed to go the governor, Alabama will join a growing list of states with a controversial school-funding program that funnels public money to private and religious institutions in the form of tax credits. That this could happen in Alabama where we vigorously resist efforts by other government entities to limit religious freedom is the greatest of ironies. That this could happen in a state where Baptists, the champions of religious liberty, are the predominant religious group, is equally astonishing.

It illustrates the difference between valuing religious liberty in theory and actually protecting that liberty in practice.

**Baptists have long understood that to use public tax money to support a religious ministry is a violation of religious liberty.**

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

#### 'HURT IN HIS EYES'

I just finished reading a piece in the March 7 issue by Jennifer Davis Rash titled, "Did you notice his eyes." I was blessed by her every word she spoke when she said, "I could see the hurt in his eyes." This reminds me of another person I remember from a long time ago. A person who at that time was living a life of crime until another

person saw in his eyes the hurt and loneliness that was tearing his life apart. This man who saw the hurt put his arms around him and said to him that God loved him and Christ died for sins. A few days later, he trusted Christ as Lord, united with a Bible-believing Southern Baptist church, and for the last 37 years he has worked as a full-time evangelist in the prison

ministry, TV ministry, pastored two churches, been on missions trips to Central America and helped feed and clothe the needy.

Johnny Brown  
Alpine, 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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# 'Pray... God's Will be done'



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## Page issues call to prayer for Supreme Court rulings on gay 'marriage'

Christians need to intensify their prayers for the Supreme Court in the countdown days to its deliberations on same-sex "marriage" later in March, according to Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC).

Page, who issued a call to prayer for the court Jan. 11, reminded members of the EC of the urgent need for prayer during his remarks at the EC's Feb. 18 plenary session in Nashville.

The court is set to hear oral arguments in March on two cases that will either lead to the legalization of gay "marriage" nationwide or affirm the rights of legislators and voters to protect traditional marriage. It will consider the constitutionality of California's Proposition 8 on March 26 and the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) on March 27.

California voters passed Proposition 8 in 2008 by a margin of 52-48 percent. The amendment stated, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." It reversed a California Supreme Court ruling that had legalized gay "marriage." A district court later declared the law established by the voter-initiated amendment unconstitutional. That court's decision was upheld by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, paving the way for it to be considered by the U.S. Supreme Court.

DOMA passed both houses of Congress in 1996 with wide bipartisan support — 342 to 67 in the House and 85 to 14 in the Senate. President Bill Clinton signed it into law. In 2011, President Barack Obama instructed the Department of Justice no longer to defend this federal law. Congress has stepped in to defend its constitutionality.

In his January call to prayer, Page listed five specific ways believers in Christ should pray for the nine justices of the highest court in our nation and for those who will present oral testimony before them.

► **Pray first and foremost that God's will be done.** Page outlined numerous instances of God's judgment on individual sin (in King David's and King Rehoboam's lives) and on national sin (against the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah).

While our preference is for God to extend mercy to us, Page said the Lord remains a

"Righteous Judge" who "punishes the unrepentant heart," whether an individual, a family or a nation. "If He allowed judgment to fall upon His chosen people throughout history, how much more on a nation that forgets God?" Page asked.

► **Nevertheless, plead for God's mercy rather than His justice.** Pointing to Habakkuk's words in Habakkuk 3:2, "Lord, I stand in awe of Your deeds. Revive Your work in these years; make it known in these years. In Your wrath remember mercy," Page called on Southern Baptists to "pray for the hearts and minds of the justices."

Though our nation has wandered far from biblical morality, "it only takes five justices," Page wrote, "to establish the constitutionality of these laws and rescue our nation from the precipice of moral destruction." He urged Christians everywhere to ask the Holy Spirit to "guide and sway each justice."

► **Pray for supernatural wisdom for those who argue for the constitutionality of these two laws.** Drawing attention to the ebb and flow of the judicial process, Page wrote, "The law is a fluid thing. It is always being shaped by a combination of factors, including precedent, logic, the effect of past laws on the human condition and even personal charisma of the presenters."

He urged Christians to "pray that the indi-

viduals selected to argue for the constitutionality of traditional marriage will have keenness of insight, eloquence and logical consistency in their arguments and in response to each question directed their way" and that "their arguments will be biblically sound, compelling, reasonable and persuasive."

► **Pray that those who argue against biblical truth will be ensnared in their own pride and taken captive by their own conceits.** In his remarks to the EC, Page expressed disappointment that the president of the United States had instructed the Department of Justice not to defend the law of the land.

Some of the arguments presented before the court will be intended to deflect the merits of the case by raising peripheral or technical matters that are not germane to the central issue. In his January call to prayer, Page observed that "the Psalmist frequently asked the Lord to let the wicked be caught in their own schemes" (Ps. 10:2).

► **Pray God's Word back to Him.** Page closed his call to prayer in January by quoting the entire chapter of Isaiah 59 as a "most fitting text for us to pray as we intercede on behalf of our nation." He noted that the Isaiah passage acknowledges God's might, His ability and His willingness "to rescue our land from imminent moral peril." (BP)

## Dept. of Justice argues for same-sex couple rights

The Obama administration came out forcefully Feb. 28 against California's ban on same-sex "marriage" and, by extension, implicated similar bans in 37 other states.

In a brief to the Supreme Court, which will hear two landmark same-sex "marriage" cases in late March, the Department of Justice argued that gay and lesbian couples should have the same right to marry as heterosexuals.

The brief marks the first time the administration has weighed in on the constitutionality of any state ban on gay "marriage." Although it was aimed at the voter initiative passed in California in 2008, it put the administration squarely against other such prohibitions.

In particular, the brief implicated the other states that, like California, allow domestic partnerships or civil unions: Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon and Rhode Island.

"The designation of marriage ... confers a special validation of the relationship between two individuals and conveys a message to society that domestic partnerships or civil unions cannot match," the Obama administration's brief states.

Polls have been shifting toward approval of gay "marriage." In a December 2012 USA TODAY survey, 53 percent of Americans said same-sex couples deserve the same marriage rights as heterosexual couples, up from 40 percent in 2009.

(RNS)



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland (right) talks with Korean students during his recent trip to Asia. While in Asia, Westmoreland and other Samford leaders worked to strengthen ties with schools and universities there.

# Building bridges

## Samford leaders tour Asia to strengthen recruitment

**S**amford University in Birmingham has already spent significant time in 2013 increasing its profile in Asia. And it started in January in a classroom of Indonesian third-graders.

Samford student Natalie Mitchell was among those helping them study English on a January trip to their school. "We sang simple songs with them like 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' and read them children's books, which they loved," Mitchell said.

She and seven other Samford education students traveled to Jakarta, Indonesia, with Jeanna Westmoreland, course lecturer for Foundations, Samford's first-year experience course, and wife of Samford President Andrew Westmoreland. "The trip to Indonesia opened the eyes of eight young women to the needs and opportunities found in a radically different culture," Jeanna Westmoreland said.

The January term course was part of a multipurpose initiative aimed at building Samford's reputation in Asia, especially within the region's Christian communities. Samford wants to raise recruitment among Asian students and provide a richer international experience for those already at Samford.

### Meeting with universities, schools

Andrew Westmoreland and several others traveled to Indonesia, China and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) as part of the initiative. That group included School of the Arts Dean Joe Hopkins, Samford international recruiter Hunter Denson and Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George.

Samford has recruited about 175 students from China since 2010 and a few from other Asian nations, but the university would like to see these numbers grow. With the help of friends in each of the three nations recently visited, Samford is establishing ties that could help meet that goal.

In Indonesia, the Westmorelands have assisted and supported a K-12 school and an 8,000-student uni-

versity — both Christian — begun in the 1990s. The opportunity for exchange programs with the Indonesian university Universitas Pelita Harapan, located near Jakarta, is being explored.

Denson said he saw "exceptional recruitment possibilities" in Indonesia because of its use of an international baccalaureate curriculum, some focus on Christ-centered education and high English-language proficiency.

In China, the group met with Roger Wang, head of a company that helps Samford recruit students from that nation. To build greater "brand awareness" of Samford in China, Wang suggested pursuing memoranda of understanding with some leading universities. The Samford group visited the University of Science and Technology, as well as the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, beginning dialogues aimed at signing cooperative agreements.

Denson noted that Wang's efforts had drawn large crowds of qualified students to informational sessions on studying at Samford.

In the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Far East Broadcasting Company Chairman Billy Kim — who spoke at Samford's commencement last May — arranged a schedule enabling Andrew Westmoreland to preach and Hopkins to sing before several thousand people at three large churches in Seoul and other cities. They also met with church and business leaders and the South Korean prime minister in meetings arranged by Kim and D. K. Lee, past president of Rotary International and recipient of an honorary doctorate from Samford.

The Christian movement is growing in South Korea, said Denson, making Samford's Christ-focused education a great fit for many Korean students.

"Perhaps hundreds of doors have opened to us over the past three weeks," Andrew Westmoreland said upon his return in late January. "The trip exceeded our expectations to the extent that I find it impossible to describe the impact." (SU)

## Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

### CP giving 3.15 percent above budgeted goal

**NASHVILLE** — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries are 3.15 percent above the year-to-date budgeted goal, but 1 percent behind contributions received during the same period last year.

Receipts totaled \$80,801,829.12, or 103.15 percent of the \$78,333,333.35 year-to-date amount budgeted to support Southern Baptist ministries nationally and globally, and \$820,271.66 less than the \$81,622,100.78 received through the end of February 2012, according to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee President Frank Page.

"We continue to monitor the economy and its impact on our cooperating churches. We have set a reasonable yet challenging Cooperative Program (CP) budget goal for this year, given how hard many Southern Baptists have been hit by the Great Recession," Page said.

"I am pleased to see that the precipitous drop in CP contributions of the previous three years has slowed and am optimistic that we are seeing positive signs of an economic recovery for our people and churches," he said.

Designated giving of \$92,520,270.11 through February is 6.13 percent, or \$5,340,338.38, above gifts of \$87,179,931.73 received at this point last year. Totals include only those gifts received and distributed by the Executive Committee and do not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

CP allocation budget receipts received by the Executive Committee are reported monthly to SBC entity executives, state offices and denominational papers and are posted online at [www.cpmiissions.net/CPReports](http://www.cpmiissions.net/CPReports).

### Ministers tax guide available from GuideStone

**DALLAS** — The 2013 edition of the ministers' annual tax guide from GuideStone Financial Resources is now available.

The Tax Return Preparation and Federal Reporting Guide provides both active and retired ministers step-by-step help in understanding the latest tax laws along with sample tax forms to assist in preparing 2012 federal tax returns.

The guide was written again this year by Richard Hammar, a noted CPA, attorney and widely published author specializing in legal and tax issues for ministers. Additionally, the material is edited by GuideStone's compliance staff to ensure that it addresses, in detail, tax issues directly affecting Southern Baptist pastors.

"As our tax system grows more complicated each year, it is a joy and a privilege for GuideStone to stand alongside the ministers we represent and provide solid counsel from a trusted source," said O.S. Hawkins, GuideStone's president. "Each year so many pastors tell us how thankful they are for this guide and how much it helps them navigate the unique ministerial tax laws. We are blessed to be able to help them with the important task of ensuring that their income tax returns are correct."

The guide can be obtained in PDF format at [GuideStone.org/TaxGuide](http://GuideStone.org/TaxGuide). GuideStone participants can order a free printed copy by calling 1-888-98-GUIDE (1-888-984-8433) between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. Central Standard time Monday through Friday.

### American professor receives BWA human rights award

**WASHINGTON** — Glen Stassen, an American theologian, ethicist and author, is the recipient of the 2013 Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award.

Stassen's nomination was confirmed at a meeting of the BWA executive committee March 5 at its international offices in Falls Church, Va.

The writings of Stassen, the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., have influenced the international peace movement for more than three decades. He is known for his work on theological ethics, politics, social justice and developing the Just Peacemaking theory in ethics in dealing with matters of war and conflict.

Stassen has worked to help found several organizations for peacemaking, operated behind the scenes to negotiate the removal of short- and middle-range nuclear weapons from Europe, testified at capital punishment cases, developed a strategy for defense attorneys in capital cases and engaged in human rights advocacy for the mentally disabled.

The Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award will be presented during the BWA Annual Gathering in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, July 1-6.



Photo courtesy of Forest Lake Baptist Church

Forest Lake Baptist Church college minister Aaron Barnes (center) takes drink orders from Michaela Granec (left) and Lillian Pardo-Long.



Photo courtesy of Forest Lake Baptist Church



Photo courtesy of Forest Lake Baptist Church

**Top:** Emily Larson of Forest Lake Baptist Church shares a gospel message with the princesses. **Bottom:** Brianna Dawson of Forest Lake Baptist Church helps herself to the candy jar bar.

# ‘Child of the King’

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

## Tuscaloosa churches reach young girls through Princess Ball event



Photo courtesy of Forest Lake Baptist Church

Nancy Woods of New Creations Salon in Tuscaloosa places a tiara on Valerie Allen of Forest Lake Baptist Church.

**I**f you know Jesus, you’re a princess. This was the message sent to 61 little girls decked out in ball gowns, eating finger sandwiches off of fine china and drinking tea out of crystal cups at the Princess Ball of Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, Feb. 23.

The focus of the event “was to share with the girls the plan of salvation and our royal heritage when you become a child of God, a child of the King,” said Donna Cicero, who oversees the children’s ministry program of Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

Circlewood and Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, were both invited to participate in Forest Lake’s Princess Ball, an event for girls in kindergarten through fifth grade.

“Girls often believe in fairy tales that don’t exist, and it crushes them when they grow up,” said Michael Allen, Forest Lake’s worship/children’s minister, whose wife, Yana, had the idea for the ball. “We want them to know that Jesus loves them and that if they are a child of the King, they are a true princess.”

During the Princess Ball, girls had their hair done by a local salon, their makeup done by makeup artists and their portraits made by a local photographer. They were all given tiaras, and they had a ballet lesson

and a lesson in table etiquette.

A candy jar bar was available for the girls to make a bag full of what they wanted, and a big table of old jewelry boxes offered beaded necklaces and other jewelry so the girls could “add to their outfits,” Cicero said.

And men from all three churches — dressed in tuxedos — served the girls tea and sandwiches on fine china and crystal, addressing each one as “your royal highness.”

### Making an impression

It made a real impression on the girls, said Michael Allen, who served as one of the hosts. Very few of the girls from Forest Lake were from families who attend church — many came as part of the church’s van ministry.

“They especially just need somebody to come around and love them and encourage them,” he said.

It was a good outreach opportunity, Cicero said.

“So many of them said, ‘This is the most fun party I’ve ever been to,’” she said.

Yana Allen said they knew the girls would enjoy dressing up — her own daughter had asked for a princess party for her last birthday, and she and her friends had loved it.

“I thought it would be a great idea for the church girls, and we could use it to tell the truth,” Yana Allen said. “The truth is that every girl is royalty when she becomes a child of God.”

Each table was decorated with the theme of a different princess — Sleeping Beauty, Jasmine, Cinderella and others — and speaker Emily Larson of Forest Lake used those themes to share the gospel.

“She did a phenomenal job. She went through the plan of salvation using those characters,” Cicero said.

Some examples, she said, were how Jesus washes us whiter than snow — like Snow White — and how He gives us His Word as a sword to carry with us, just as Princess Merida from the movie “Brave” carries a weapon with her always.

At the end of the day, 29 girls indicated they would like to know more about Jesus. The three churches are now following up with those girls, and at least one has already made a public decision to follow Christ at Forest Lake.

“We are so excited about what happened this year,” Michael Allen said. “It’s been an awesome event, and we are planning to do it again next year.”

For information about how to plan a Princess Ball, contact Michael Allen at 205-759-1569 or mallen@fbc.us. ❧

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

## BESSEMER

► The worship ministry of **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will present "The First Light" Easter musical March 29–30, 7 p.m. For information call 205-425-4381. Child care will be available through 4 years old. Morgan Bailey is pastor. ► The JOY Fellowship of **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will meet March 26. Wayne and Margaret Alexander will be the guests. For information call program director Lloyd Jones at 205-425-0354 or the church office at 205-477-8265 or visit [www.bcmcadory.org](http://www.bcmcadory.org). Bill McCall is pastor.

## BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a third Sunday night singing March 17, 6 p.m. with Alverson Boyd from Huntsville. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

## CHEROKEE

► The churches of **Cherokee Association** recently conducted a February food drive for the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries' efforts in Oxford. The churches gave 11,649 pounds of food, the most ever for this drive. Wendell Dutton is director of missions.

## CHILTON

► **Concord Church, Clanton**, will hold revival March 17–20. Sunday services will be at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. with lunch at noon. Monday–Wednesday services will be at 6:30 p.m. Andy Mims, pastor of Mulberry Church, Isabella, will speak. There also will be special music each night. For information call the church at 205-755-4754. Randal Mims is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **Lee Street Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival, "Lighting the Fire Again," March 17–20, Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Ken Chancellor will speak and Gunter Akridge will lead worship. A nursery will be provided each service. For information call 334-347-4981. Larry Doster is pastor. ► **Zion**

**Chapel Church, Elba**, will host a seven-church revival through March 15 and again March 17. Sunday services will be at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7 p.m. Participating churches include: Zion Chapel Church, Elba; Wise Mill Assembly, Elba; Mount Zion Church, New Brockton; Hebron Church, Troy; Victoria Church, Jack; Whitewater Church, Elba; and Woodland Grove Church, Elba. For information call Donnie Marler at 334-897-5471. Cary Maulden is pastor of Zion Chapel.

## CONECUH

► **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will hold January Bible Study in March focusing on "The Greatest Week in History" on March 24–27, 6:30 p.m. Dale Huff, director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will lead the study. Everyone is invited. Jim Griffin is pastor.

## MOBILE

► Darcie Gill, Voice of the Martyrs representative, will speak at **Indian Springs Church, Eight Mile**, on March 24, 6 p.m. Charles Couey is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY

► **First Church, Montgomery**, and Prison Fellowship Ministries will hold the "Bringing Hope!" prison ministry conference at First, Montgomery, on April 6, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Registration will be from 8:30–9 a.m. Jay Wolf, pastor of First, Montgomery, and Kim Thomas, Alabama Department of Corrections commissioner, will speak. Four workshops will be offered and lunch will be provided. To register call Shari Llanos at 1-800-251-7411, ext. 8139 or email [shari\\_llanos@pfm.org](mailto:shari_llanos@pfm.org). ► **Operation Inasmuch United**, an interdenominational, community missions event with churches in Lowndes and Montgomery counties, will be held March 16. The event is sponsored by Olive Tree Ministries of Alabama and **Montgomery Baptist Association**. Participating teams will meet at Hayneville Church at 7:30 a.m. for prayer, to finalize

teams and leave for construction projects on selected homes. Most projects will go into the afternoon. No child care will be provided during the event. Lunch will be provided. For information call Hayneville Church at 334-548-2620 or Montgomery Association at 334-271-6227. Darrell Paulk is pastor of Hayneville Church.

## MUD CREEK

► **Mud Creek Association** ministers' wives will sponsor a field trip to Samford University's Special Collection Department on April 19, departing from the association office at 9 a.m. to learn how to preserve church history. Ken Maddox is director of missions.

## SHELBY

► Bryant Wright, immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will be the special guest at **Community Church, Maylene**, for a mid-week service April 3, 6:30 p.m. Bo Brown is pastor.

## ST. CLAIR

► **Friendship Church, Springville**, will host "Becoming," a St. Clair Baptist ladies event, April 6, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Brenda Ladun will speak and Julia Hill will lead worship. Breakout sessions include: Becoming a Witness: On Mission with God; Becoming a Saver: Extreme Couponing; Becoming a Rescuer: Human Trafficking; and Becoming an Artist: Praise n' Paint. Snacks and lunch will be offered and door prizes will be available. For ticket information and the list of items to bring to the event (everyone is asked to bring one item on the list), call Linda Smith at 205-594-5173. The missions emphasis will be The WellHouse in Birmingham. Cliff Vines is pastor.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Chapel Hill Church, Northport**, will hold the 3rd annual Cruisin Car Show and Rummage Sale on April 13, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Door prize giveaways will be offered. For information visit [www.chapelhillbc.org](http://www.chapelhillbc.org). James Nichols is pastor.

## The Pursuit encourages students to think 'outside box'

College and high school students from across the state gathered at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, Feb. 22–23 for The Pursuit Conference, sponsored by the office of collegiate and student ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Crossover Group.

Challenged to see their vocation as a calling, students were encouraged to think of ministry outside the "missionary to a foreign country" or "pastor of a church" box.

Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee; Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.; and Chris Hogan, of Dave Ramsey Speakers Group, challenged the students to know God's will, seek confirmation of God's call and accept the challenge to obey that calling.

More than 20 breakout session leaders — including a Su-



Photo by Doug Rogers

**VOCATION** — Jeff Iorg, president of Gold Gate Seminary, prays over students at The Pursuit.

preme Court justice, a realtor, a businesswoman and a high school football coach, to name a few — shared about their personal vocation and how they use it and see it as a ministry.

"The Pursuit was a great event that really helped my students flesh out and understand God's call and purpose for their life," said Jake Duke, campus minister in the West Alabama area. "It will have a lasting impact far beyond a weekend experience." (SBOM, TAB)



## Ralph B. Jernigan

*Former pastor, TBFA director emeritus dies*

Ralph B. Jernigan, a pastor of several Alabama churches and director emeritus of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, died March 2. He was 82.

Born in Goshen, Jernigan graduated from Howard College (now Samford University in Birmingham). He also earned a degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Jernigan served as pastor of Munford Baptist Church; Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham; Central Park Baptist Church, Birmingham; First Baptist Church, Troy; First Baptist Church, Talladega; and New Beginning Baptist Church, Alexander City, where he also served as pastor emeritus.

He served as interim pastor of several Alabama churches, most recently at Jackson's Gap Baptist Church.

Jernigan served as a trustee for Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega, Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham, New Orleans Seminary and Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. He was on the board of governors for Judson College in Marion, and he served on the committee on boards of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Jernigan served many roles in Alabama Baptist life and felt it was "a part of his ministry," according to his son, John Jernigan.

Ralph Jernigan was preceded in death by his wife, Kathryn Elizabeth. He is survived by three children; eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)

## Samford to host Youth Evangelism Conference

Life is more than a game. And when we put our passion into a game, we miss the mark every time, said Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

That's why this year's Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC) is aimed to show students that life is

about much more than that — it's about a relationship with Jesus Christ that consumes everything, Nuss said.

The conference, set for Aug. 2–3 at Samford University in Birmingham, will encourage students, youth leaders, parents and churches to put their passion into what lasts and make sure students have a personal relation-

ship with Jesus Christ, he said.

More than two-thirds of Alabama's students don't have a relationship with Jesus, Nuss said. "We hope the conference will not just reach students but also encourage students to go back and be witnesses on their campus."

For more information about the YEC, visit [onemissionstudents.org](http://onemissionstudents.org). (TAB)

# 'The healing continues'

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist



Montgomery Advertiser/Lloyd Gallman

U.S. Rep. John Lewis (left) stands with Montgomery Police Chief Kevin Murphy during a March 2 ceremony at FBC Montgomery on Ripley Street. Murphy gave Lewis his badge to apologize for the department's failure to protect him and other Freedom Riders during a 1961 attack.

## Montgomery police chief apologizes to US Rep. Lewis for not protecting Freedom Riders in 1961

**A**s Montgomery Police Chief Kevin Murphy unpinned his badge from his uniform, only he and the Lord knew what he was about to do. But both of them had known for a long time.

"I had been thinking about it for a while. It had been on my mind and I had thought about it and prayed about it," Murphy said. He'd even had some sleepless nights.

But he knew March 2 was "the right opportunity." He had been asked to speak at a ceremony at historic First Baptist Church on Ripley Street in Montgomery as part of the 13th Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Alabama.

So he did.

But his speech soon became an apology to U.S. Rep. John Lewis on behalf of the

Montgomery police department, which stood down while Lewis and other Freedom Riders were beaten by a mob at the local Greyhound station May 20, 1961.

Then, after apologizing, Murphy took off his badge and presented it to Lewis.

His gesture moved Lewis to tears.

### 'He is my hero'

"He (Lewis) was so gracious in his acceptance of it," Murphy said. "He is a man of great courage. He is my hero. The way he carries himself, he is an inspiration to me and to all of us here."

Lewis said Murphy was the first chief in America to apologize, and it "means a great deal."

Lewis, who was born in Troy, was beaten several times as he pursued civil rights. He was hit in the head with a wooden crate during the Montgomery skirmish, and Alabama State Troopers beat him on "Bloody

Sunday" in Selma on March 7, 1965. He was arrested and jailed more than 40 times in America and four times in South Africa.

But Lewis' goal was always peace, he said. While studying at American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, he began to study the nonviolent tactics of Jesus and Mahatma Gandhi.

In every human, he said, there is a "spark of the divine."

"We all live in the same house. We must care for each other," Lewis told students and faculty at Judson College in Marion on Feb. 21 when the college awarded him an honorary degree.

"We're all children of the King," he said. "Never give up. Never become bitter. Keep your faith. Let the Spirit of God Almighty be your guide."

Because of gestures like Murphy's, "the healing continues," Lewis said.

"It moves us toward reconciliation, and that was what the movement was all about," he said.

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, on South Perry Street, said reconciliation has been a matter of collective prayer for black and white pastors for nearly 20 years. This gathering of pastors, called John 17, finds its goal in Christ's prayer: "Father, I pray that they would be one so that the world may believe that you sent me."

"Police Chief Murphy's apology provides another chapter in the long book of how God is bringing together the body of Christ to facilitate spiritual awakening," Wolf said.

Montgomery is the "cradle of the Civil War and the civil rights movement" but also is filled with "dynamic Christ-followers," he said. "Montgomery was known for

division but it is now known for reconciliation.

"Chief Murphy's offering of a sincere apology for the injustices suffered by the Freedom Riders and giving John Lewis his badge provides another beautiful portrait of the reality of racial reconciliation," Wolf said. "I am confident that God wants to send a great revival in our day, but if the Lord's Church is divided by racial division, then the flow of His life-giving Spirit will be impeded."

Murphy's actions "align with God's call to speak His truth and live His love," Wolf said.

But Murphy is quick to say he's no hero.

"It was a very easy decision to make, because it was the right

thing to do," he said. "I really feel like God directed me ... I think that somebody who is wearing this uniform with this iconic patch that you see in the photographs of Martin Luther King (Jr.) and Rosa Parks, that that voice needs to be heard in a different light from what history has recorded in years past."

### Very personal decision

It was a very personal decision, he said. "I didn't want any attention. I didn't even talk to my own wife about it."

When he got home from the ceremony, his wife, Debbie, asked him how it went, and he told her it was "an outstanding and beautiful service" — nothing more.

A few hours later, after she got a phone call, she sought him out on the other side of the house and said, "Is there something you want to tell me?"

In doing what he did, Murphy "pleased the King and built the Kingdom," Wolf said. ❧



Photo by Bill Mathews

Rep. John Lewis (center) is hooded by Judson College President David Potts and Judson artist-in-residence Billie Jean Young after receiving an honorary degree Feb. 21.

# 'Proverbial IRON FIST'



Graphic by Lauren C. Grim

## North Korea's 'hatred of Christians' puts 70,000 believers in 'Holocaust'-like prisons

**P**ersecution of Christians in North Korea shows no sign of abating under the country's new leader, Kim Jong-Un, according to a report by the worldwide ministry Open Doors.

"The fanatical regime, which rules the destitute country of 24 million people with a proverbial iron fist, has a special hatred for Christians," Jerry Dykstra of the California-based Open Doors USA noted. "North Korea is in a league of its own when it comes to persecution of Christians."

Dykstra's and other reports parallel incidents in North Korea chronicled in the U.S. State Department's religious freedom assessments.

Of an estimated 200,000 prisoners in North Korea, 70,000 of them are Christians, Open Doors reported. For the 11th consecutive year, North Korea tops Open Doors' list of the worst countries for its brutal treatment of believers.

North Korea is run like a giant religious cult, Dykstra wrote. He noted two ideologies that drive the regime: "Juche," which asserts that man is self-reliant, and "Kimilsungism," which is the worship of leaders.

Christianity is viewed as a Western-instigated threat to the regime, Dykstra wrote in an article that appeared on the Religion Today website Feb. 19.

Based on defectors, circumstantial evidence and international observers' reports, Dykstra has concluded that the situation for North Korean Christians is deteriorating rather than improving.

"Many North Koreans attempt to escape to neighboring China, and an informal network of Christians seek to provide practical assistance when they cross the border," Dykstra wrote. "However, the reach of Pyongyang extends even into China. Police officials follow the refugees over the border and hunt down and vigorously prosecute those who convert to Christianity while in China or those who attempt to bring Christian literature back to North Korea."

North Koreans who return to their country are interrogated about whether they met any Christians in China and whether they visited a church in China, the Open Doors report said.

Recently a Christian was shot and killed while returning for Bible training in China, Dykstra wrote. An Open Doors worker reported, "He was very excited about his new faith

and wanted to share the gospel with his family. He wanted to come back to China to study the Bible more so he could explain the Christian faith better to his family."

Another Christian, who also had studied the Bible in China, died in a labor camp, Open Doors reported.

"The number of trained North Korean spies inside China is growing," Dykstra wrote. "They are attempting to track down human rights activists and Christians helping North Korean refugees."

Amid such hardships, the faith of North Korean believers is strong, Dykstra wrote. Open Doors obtained a letter from an underground church leader who noted, "No matter what circumstances we face, we stand firm in the mighty hands of God, and we will continue to march strongly toward the eternal kingdom."

A report by Mission Network News on Feb. 7 corroborated the Open Doors accounts, stating that Kim Jong-Un is "making life difficult for Christians."

Mission Network News, in conjunction with Christian Aid Mission, explained that in the early 1900s, Pyongyang was known as the "Jerusalem of the East" because Christianity had taken root and about 3,000 churches were established and growing.

Persecution of Christians began shortly thereafter, in 1910, when Japan seized control of the Korean peninsula, and it worsened with the rise of the current communist regime at the end of World War II.

### God's love brings 'light to darkness'

Mission Network News said a North Korean man who leads three underground churches was arrested and charged with espionage for helping North Korean refugees escape into China. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison, but after someone gave the government money on his behalf, his sentence was reduced to five years.

"Christian ministry leaders in North Korea are encouraged as God's love shines forth, bringing light to darkness and transforming hearts," Mission Network News said. "Whatever the political situation, they can experience spiritual freedom through the redeeming power of Jesus Christ."

Writing for *World Magazine* Feb. 22, Mindy Belz reported that one week after North Korea's recent nuclear test — which entailed a 5.1-magnitude explosion — two survivors of the country's state gulag testified before the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"Shin Dong-hyuk and Kang Chol-hwan say the state's

political prison system is incarcerating 200,000 'criminals' — many of them Christians — in Holocaust-like camps: 'Fundamentally, it's the same as Hitler's Auschwitz,' testified Kang. 'People think the Holocaust is in the past, but it is still very much a reality. It is still going on in North Korea,' Shin told reporters on the sidelines of the human-rights summit," Belz wrote.

The U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2011, the most recent year available, noted that since 2001 the secretary of state has designated North Korea as a Country of Particular Concern for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

### 'Arrested, beaten, tortured or killed'

Representatives of foreign governments, journalists and other invited guests, though, are not allowed the freedom of movement within North Korea that would enable them to fully assess human rights conditions or confirm reported abuses, the State Department said.

According to reports by refugees, defectors, missionaries and nongovernmental organizations, religious people who engage in proselytizing in North Korea and those who have contact with foreigners or missionaries "were arrested and subjected to harsh penalties," the State Department said.

"Refugees and defectors stated that they witnessed or heard of arrests and possible executions of underground Christian church members in prior years," the report said.

North Korea's constitution and other laws and policies provide for religious freedom, the State Department said, but "members of underground churches were arrested, beaten, tortured or killed because of their religious beliefs."

There are four state-controlled Christian churches in Pyongyang, and "some foreigners who visited the country stated that church services appeared staged and, in addition to religious themes, contained political content supportive of the government," the State Department recounted.

Kim Jong-Il, along with his father before him, sought to assert an ideological legitimacy by promoting a cult of personality and emphasizing a "military-first" policy, the State Department said. Kim Jong-Un reportedly has followed in their footsteps.

Mission Network News offered these prayer requests:

- ▶ Pray for wise, bold believers and the rapid expansion of underground churches.
- ▶ Pray for spiritual encouragement for believers who are enduring extremely harsh prison conditions.
- ▶ Pray for a wide dissemination of Bibles.
- ▶ Pray for God to protect Christians from the authorities and to enable them to minister undetected. (BP)



KIM JONG-UN



Photo by Bruce Brasher

Pastor Kevin Blackwell (center, left) and children's pastor Steven Hicks (center, right) of Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown, participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the newly opened children's building.



Photo by Debbie Campbell

# 'Evangelism tool'

By Julie Payne  
The Alabama Baptist

## Hueytown's Valley Creek aims to reach community with new children's, youth space

When Kevin Blackwell, pastor of Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown, looks at his church's new 9,000-square-foot children's building, he sees more than just a structure.

"It's an evangelism tool," he said.

And the building, with separate wings for nursery/preschool and children's ministry, doesn't exist just for those within the church's walls — it's for the entire community. "Anything we do here at Valley Creek, we do for the community," Blackwell noted.

The new building has been a long time coming for the church. In 2005 when Blackwell began serving as pastor of Valley Creek Baptist, there weren't many kids there. "I knew children's ministry was so important," Blackwell said.

With an intentional focus on children's ministry, the church brought on its children's minister and began to see kids attend and become saved. "Before we knew it, we had outgrown our facilities in regards to children and youth space," Blackwell said.

The church formed an exploratory committee, and through surveying the congregation and talking to staff members they soon realized the need for a new children's building and a larger youth space.

"That began it all," Blackwell said. In the fall of 2011, the church began a stewardship campaign known as "Bridge to the Future."

Phase one of construction includes the

newly opened children's building. It also includes the renovation of existing space for the youth group complete with state-of-the-art technology and a café, kitchenette and game room.

Church members did the work themselves for the youth space, with men in the church sacrificing many hours of their own time to see the construction completed.

The design of Valley Creek's new children's building was a collaboration of children's pastor Steven Hicks, an architect and the children's building committee.

### 'Building kids up in Christ'

According to Hicks, the left half of the building includes the nursery and preschool wing for bed babies to 4-year-olds. The other half, the children's ministry wing, includes two children's worship rooms: The Construction Yard, for kindergarten through second grade, and Kids Zone, for third through sixth graders.

Hicks noted the ministry mantra for Valley Creek's children's ministry is "Building kids up in Christ," a theme incorporated into many indoor elements like the construction and road designs in Kids Zone.

The children's building marks the first structure built on the campus since 1980, and to celebrate its grand opening Valley Creek held both a ribbon-cutting ceremony and afternoon open house for the community March 3.

During the 11 a.m. worship service the same day, the children's building committee chairperson spoke to the congregation and Blackwell preached from Nehemiah during

**Top:** Children have a good time in the playroom of the new children's building at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.  
**Right:** Workers at the children's welcome center greet families as they come through the main entrance.



Photo by Debbie Campbell

his sermon titled "Building Together."

Hueytown's mayor and some city council members attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony that afternoon, and as Hicks cut the ribbon with Blackwell he sensed the excitement and anticipation of the kids in the crowd. "Seeing their facial expressions ... was really neat," he said. "They couldn't wait to see (the building)."

Blackwell looked out over the crowd during the ceremony and spotted people who had been members for decades and others who were new to the church — generations who had "all come together to celebrate," he said.

Hicks added that the new building is not only "for now" but for "future generations" as well.

And people of all ages have given sacrificially to the campaign, Blackwell said. "It could not have been done without the sacrifice of our people," he said.

When God puts a vision in the hearts of His people, "this is what can happen," Blackwell said of his church. "What's happening here is not restrictive to [Valley Creek]," he said, adding that churches just have to allow God to work. "I want our church to be an encouragement to other churches," he said. ☞

# CAMPUS News



## UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Civil War Journalism Topic at Upcoming Hinson Lecture Series at University of Mobile:** The University of Mobile's (UMobile) Hinson Lecture Series will examine Civil War journalism with author Ford Risley.

Risley, a professor at Penn State University, will discuss "Blue and Gray in Black and White" on April 11 at 7 p.m. at Moorer Auditorium on UMobile's campus.

According to Lonnie Burnett, professor of history at UMobile and director of the Billy G. Hinson Lecture Series, Risley will examine the press in the American Civil War.

Risley received his Ph.D. from the University of Florida and is the author of many scholarly articles and three books.

His most recent work, "Civil War Journalism," has been described as "an extraordinarily well-written and insightful examination of the role of the Northern and Southern press during the

nation's most wrenching time of conflict."

Prior to his tenure at Penn State, he worked as a reporter for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and was a freelance writer for *The Dallas Morning News*, *New York Times* and several other publications.

For more information about the Hinson Lecture, contact Burnett at 251-442-2319 or lburnett@umobile.edu.

## JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Biographer Returns to Judson College:** Former Southern Baptist missionary and Alabama Woman's Missionary Union President Rosalie Hall Hunt, of Guntersville,



HUNT

spoke at Judson College chapel March 5, telling about her recent trip to Myanmar (Burma) retracing the steps of Adoniram and Ann Judson. 2013 is the 200th anniversary year of the couple leaving America and beginning their missionary work.

Hunt published "Bless God and Take Courage — The Judson History and Legacy" in 2005, which chronicles the lives of the Judsons. Judson College, founded in

1838, is named for Ann Judson.

► **Two From Marion Academy Commit to Judson College:** Two Marion Academy seniors have signed athletic contracts for Judson College volleyball — Madison Murphy, daughter of Michael and Janella Murphy, of Marion; and Margaret Ashley Lee, daughter of Shane and Deborah Lee, of Marion. Murphy plans to study pre-dentistry and Lee plans to major in social work.



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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.

**MINISTER OF MUSIC AND WORSHIP:** Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, Tenn., is seeking a full-time leader of music and worship. The worship leader will be responsible for planning and conducting worship services, directing various choirs, praise team and instrumentalists. Our worship services are a blend of traditional and contemporary music. A bachelor's degree in music is required. A master's degree is preferred. Please send all resumés to: Springfield Baptist Church, Music Search Committee, 400 North Main Street, Springfield, TN 37172. Please include a recent worship service DVD. Emails may be sent to: bethbohler05@gmail.com.

**WORSHIP LEADER/STUDENT MINISTER:** Camellia Baptist Church in Prattville is currently seeking a God-called individual to serve in this combination position. Seminary degree is preferred, previous experience required. Please send resumés to: 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, ATTN: Personnel Committee.

**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.

**STUDENT PASTOR:** First Baptist

Church of the Islands in Savannah, Ga., is seeking a full-time student pastor to lead their student ministry (grades 6-12) in a growing and thriving church setting. The ideal candidate has a sense of God's specific call to reach and minister to middle and high school students. Strong personal skills in relating to students and families will be expected along with a desire to invest life and time in the lives of students. Ability to oversee a variety of facets of student ministry is a must. This position will oversee approximately 60-80 students with potential for incredible growth. Please send resumés with cover letter and references to: searchteam@fbcislands.com, or to: Search Team FBC Islands, 6613 Johnny Mercer Boulevard, Savannah, GA 31410.

**YOUTH MINISTER:** Searching for bivocational/part-time youth minister. (Two a.m. services, attendance 300, www.unionhillbaptist.org) Send resumés to: Search Committee at bbarnett@otelco.net, or 2919 Hwy 39, Oneonta, AL 35121.

**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.

**INDEPENDENT SALES ASSOCIATE CONTRACTOR:** The 170-year-old *Alabama Baptist* is an award-winning statewide weekly newspaper with more than 200,000 readers. Baptists

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

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## Want to know God?

By Pastor Randy Breedlove  
First Baptist Church, Opp

Power, money, sex and status are important in our world. Just talk with anyone in your sphere of influence and these topics will surface in some way quickly. For example, your best friend at work is talking about his new promotion and the added salary that accompanies it. That's power, money and status.

Men would be lying if they didn't admit the regular temptations that confront them through the Internet, work, social circles and more. Every one of us faces the temptation to be pleased by the things of this world. Where can we truly find happiness? Is happiness found in our job, our bank account or sexuality? God made us. He made us with an emptiness that must be filled. This void or desire is rightly filled by God's peace and joy. We can try and fill it with a variety of worldly pleasures, but the happiness is short-lived. The richest man to ever live, Solomon, tried everything and after enjoying every worldly pleasure, here's what he said: "I said in my heart, Come now I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself. But behold, this also was vanity" (Eccles. 2:1). Here's what Solomon found after enjoying every pleasure — it was empty.

Maybe you feel empty. Your life lacks something. Paul said this to a group of men wanting more out of life: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands ... He gives to all life, breath, and all things ... so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him" (Acts 17:24-25, 27a). God made everything and He gives true meaning to life to those who seek Him. Seeking pleasure in life is a good thing. We just need to seek after the One who gives us the greatest pleasure — the Lord Jesus. There's joy and pleasure in truly knowing God and He gives life to sinners like us who will seek after Him. King David said it this way: "In Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forever" (Ps. 16:11). God wants you to know Him. Seek Him and you'll find Him. As Paul says, "He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

# Going beyond race & ethnicity

## Southern Baptists 'must continue to work toward reaching all members of our local communities'

(continued from page 1)

Working in conjunction with the SBOM, these church planters focus primarily on establishing congregations in under-reached African-American, Hispanic and Asian communities, though church plants around the state include outreach to Arab, Creek Indian and Messianic Jewish communities as well.

Rick Barnhart, who recently took over as director of the office of church planting and associational missions for SBOM, said Alabama efforts to establish ethnic church plants are concentrated on training leaders for these churches.

"We are getting these (church planters) equipped with core values and basic administrative skills so they can develop a strategy for how to reach their community for Christ," he said.

Before coming to the SBOM in August 2012, Barnhart served in associational missions for Baldwin Baptist Association. It was there, he said, that he began to realize the need for ethnic congregations in the state as well as for additional resources to establish such ministries. In Mobile, for example, the International Ministry Center, a ministry of Baldwin Association, serves as a centralized location that can both minister to the many international seamen who enter the Port of Mobile and

provide resources to ethnic churches in the area, which include Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese and Korean congregations.

Barnhart said it is essential to have individuals who speak the language to help families in these ethnic communities. He noted growth in ethnic congregations in Alabama's largest cities, as well as the growth of Hispanic ministries around the state.

"It's phenomenal the kinds of things we're seeing happen," Barnhart said.

Because of the nature of ACP statistics, it's impossible to know the diversity of individuals within the SBC — only the diversity of SBC congregations, said Richie Stanley, the director of the Center for Missional Research at NAMB.

"We are only able to categorize congregations by ethnicities — not members — because the ACP only asks the predominant ethnicity of congregations, not

individuals," Stanley said.

However, Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, believes not much has changed in terms of diversity in the local church. In a blog post in June 2012, Stetzer noted that the new gains in ethnic congregations in the SBC are "coming from churches which are of one race." He added that Southern Baptists "must continue to work toward reaching all members of our local communities for Christ, not just the ones who look like us."

Some Alabama Baptist churches are doing just that. Cross Roads Baptist Church, Wellington, in Calhoun Baptist Association is an example of a church where the mission goes beyond race and ethnicity, said Pastor Jake Brown.

Brown said the church began four years ago as a church plant supported by Calhoun Baptists and the SBOM. To-

day the church averages 50 people each Sunday, and though the membership is predominantly white, the church has many African-American members and some Hispanic members, too.

"Cross Roads has never said we want to focus on this community or that community," Brown said. "Our mission is to reach Wellington for Jesus."

### Sharing with all people

Cross Roads deacon Tony Haver, who has been at the church since its beginning, said that as members of different ethnic backgrounds began to come to the church, he and others realized that the vision statement of the church, "to reach the community ... with the message of the hope of Christ," was being accomplished.

"Our vision statement doesn't say the affluent or the white. It says the community and we do our best to do that," Haver said.

Ken Weathersby, NAMB's presidential ambassador for ethnic church relations, said he is grateful to God for the growing diversity in the SBC.

"[These numbers are] saying that the Southern Baptist Convention is no longer monolithic. The Southern Baptist Convention is very diversified. It is open to all peoples — regardless of ethnicity and race." ❧

**"[These numbers are] saying that the Southern Baptist Convention is no longer monolithic. The Southern Baptist Convention is very diversified."**

**Ken Weathersby  
North American Mission Board**

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By Jimmy Dixon

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**Jimmy Dixon**

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# Engaging in community outreach

## Newlywed couple moves to Chicago's Wicker Park to plant church, invest

**L**ook around Chicago's Wicker Park and you'll find just about every kind of person you can imagine. You may meet 44-year-old Maurice Burr, the one-time high school football star who spends his days in a wheelchair because of gang violence.

You may meet Charlie the drifter, the homeless man who wanders through the neighbor-

hood warning people of government conspiracies. You could run into the young, highly educated, well-dressed couple who come to the park to walk their dog and let their young son play. There's also the senior citizen couple that sit at the park to get some fresh air before heading back to the nearby assisted living center.

And thanks to the generosity of Southern Baptists, there's a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planter there, too.

"It's the most eclectic place

you can imagine," said NAMB church planter Scott Venable. "It has drug dealers and business-people. When we prayerwalked as we were looking for a place to start the church and we got to Wicker Park, we just knew it was it."

Wicker Park is both a large park off of Chicago's North Damen Avenue and one of the most famous neighborhoods in the Windy City. Called by Forbes the fourth-coolest neighborhood in the United States, it's the kind of place where million-dollar homes are just a few blocks down from government housing.

It's also a place that needs churches. Chicagoland — the 10 Illinois counties that surround the city — has one Southern Baptist church for every 31,791 people.



NAMB photo

North American Mission Board Week of Prayer missionary Scott Venable and his wife, Ashley, made the decision to plant a church in Chicago while still engaged. They moved to the area to plant Mosaic Chicago shortly after their honeymoon.

Evangelicals make up just 10 percent of the population. The Wicker Park neighborhood itself had just four small evangelical

churches for about 23,000 people before Venable's arrival.

And it was just the right place for him. The inner city had long been within his sights. He remembers serving in the Dallas inner city as a young person and feeling a kinship to the culture, music and speed of urban life.

With a vision for starting a church that would change its city, Venable and his then fiancé, Ashley, began praying about where God might want to use them before they even married.

### God's calling


When the couple visited Chicago around Easter 2009 — and Wicker Park specifically — God spoke clearly to both of them. Before the two said "I do" that May, they decided Chicago would be their new home.

After arriving in Chicago, the Venables went first to a local school in the Wicker Park area and offered to serve. The offer first took the principal by surprise. She

**"We want to help pour into the life of these kids."**

Scott Venable, North American Mission Board

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NAMB photo

Ashley Venable leads story time at Kidz Club, a community outreach of Mosaic Chicago, the church where her husband, Scott, serves as pastor in the Chicago neighborhood of Wicker Park.



NAMB photo

Community outreach is a cornerstone for Mosaic Chicago. Church planter Scott Venable (right) connected with a Wicker Park school, leading the church to start Kidz Club and Friday Night Live as alternative activities for children and students in the area.

## in community

was accustomed to having church plants want to use their facility to host church services — not offer free help.

“We’re a new church here and really small,” Venable told the principal. “We want to help this school become what you want it to be. We want to invest in the community. I like your vision. I like your dream. We want to help pour into the life of these kids.”

### Community involvement

The flabbergasted principal took him up on the offer. Every day in the beginning, Venable showed up at the school to help — everything from tutoring to coaching sports to providing playground patrol.

Through its engagement with the school, Venable started a “Kidz Club” and “Friday Night Live” for children and youth on Friday evenings. Instead of roaming the streets, teens come for free food, basketball and a short Bible story. On average 50 youth and 20 elementary students attend.

And the community has taken notice. A local reporter discovered the young church plant was cleaning the toilets of businesses near Wicker Park. Soon Mosaic Chicago became known as “the toilet-cleaning church” — a nickname welcomed by Venable because it demonstrates the community involvement and ministry he desires.

“Our measurement — instead of asking how is our church doing — is how is our city doing?” Venable said.

Yet most important, Venable wants to see people come to faith in Christ. He points to one particular local grandma as an example. Venable first met her grandson — one of the most troublesome kids in school — in the principal’s office. The boy started coming to Mosaic Chicago’s Friday evening Kidz Club after seeing Venable carrying a stack of pizzas out of a carryout restaurant the day of the event. Through her grandson’s involvement, the grandmother began attending regularly and has even gotten involved in a small group and missions projects through the church.

“That’s what we want to see in all

these people’s lives — to go from not knowing Jesus to fully following Jesus and carrying out the kingdom-disciple-society DNA in their lives,” Venable said.

Venable realizes that kind of ministry has only happened because of Southern Baptists’ faithful giving through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) for North American Missions.

“During these first three years of our church plant, Annie has been the biggest part of our support,” Venable said. “It’s allowed me to live here and support my family. Without NAMB and Annie, we wouldn’t be here.”

The Week of Prayer for North American Missions and the AAEO provide support for Venable 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 about Scott Venable and Mosaic Chicago, visit [anniearmstrong.com/scottvenable](http://anniearmstrong.com/scottvenable) or [mosaicchicago.org](http://mosaicchicago.org). For more information about how you can get involved in reaching Chicago with the gospel, visit [namb.net/Chicago](http://namb.net/Chicago). (NAMB)

**“Our measurement — instead of asking how is our church doing — is how is our city doing?”**

Scott Venable, North American Mission Board

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# World Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

## Quebecers no longer among least religious

TORONTO — A new poll suggests Quebecers are no longer among the least religious residents of Canada.

Quebecers are now slightly more likely to feel an “attachment to religion” than they have in previous years, while other Canadians are less likely to feel attached to religion, according to the Leger Marketing poll for the Association for Canadian Studies.

While Quebecers have tended to be “more averse to organized religion,” the recent data suggest their “antipathy to religion may have bottomed,” the survey concluded.

The poll suggested that 36 percent of Canadians said they are “very” or “somewhat” attached to religion, down from 39 percent two years ago. Religious attachment among Quebecers, meanwhile, rose from 26 percent to 34 percent over that time period. Older Canadians generally still feel attached to religion — 52 percent of those 65 and older said they were “very” or “somewhat” attached.

The online survey of 2,200 Canadians was conducted in November 2012, well before news that Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the former archbishop of Quebec, was among the front-runners to replace Pope Benedict XVI, who resigned Feb. 28.

Jack Jedwab, executive director of the Association for Canadian Studies, speculated to Postmedia News that the October 2012 elevation of 17th-century aboriginal woman Kateri Tekakwitha to sainthood may have given Catholicism a slight boost in Quebec, where she spent the last days of her life.

The survey has an error margin of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

## Christians urged to pray for unity after Chávez’s death

CARACAS, Venezuela — With the death of Hugo Chávez, Venezuelans face an uncertain future after his 14-year presidency. The nation’s evangelical community is urging Christians around the world to be in prayer for their country. Chávez, 58, died March 5 after battling cancer.

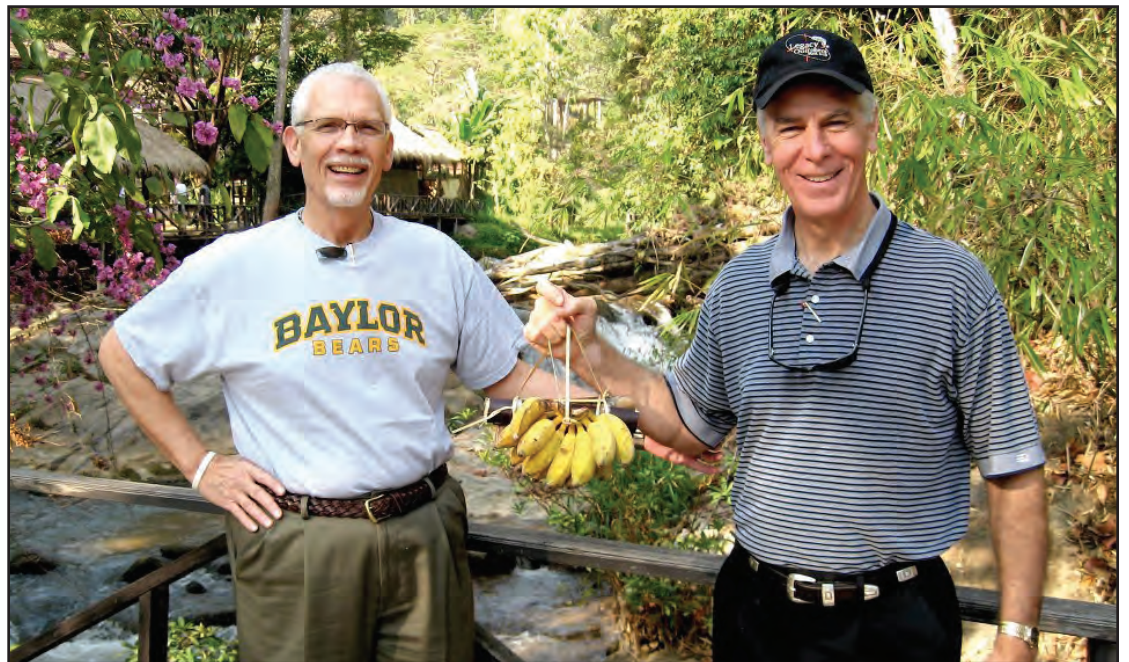
“[March 6], scores of people came into the street to view his funeral procession and show their respect for the fallen leader,” a Christian worker in Venezuela said. The country has declared seven days of mourning for their president.

Consejo Evangélico de Venezuela (The Evangelical Council of Venezuela), a Venezuelan organization of evangelicals including the National Baptist Convention of Venezuela, issued a statement March 5 offering condolences to the president’s family and all Venezuelans, and calling for Christians to pray for peace and unity in their nation.

The statement urged Venezuelans to “avoid hatred, damaging language and confrontational attitudes” during this time of national grief and to “look to God as our only giver of grace and truth.”

Alluding to political divisions and tensions that have plagued Venezuela during the Chávez administration, the statement encouraged Venezuelans to “live together in the midst of differences.”

The statement also challenged Venezuelans to be peacemakers — to “be a country that constructs peace and rejects confrontation.”



BP photo

Mike Toby (right), pastor of FBC Woodway, Texas, died of brain cancer only a month before Jim Gray (left), minister of senior adults at the Waco-area church, was killed in a car wreck Jan. 30.

# ‘GOD... with us’

## Texas church loses 2 pastors 1 month apart

**T**exas pastor Mike Toby was dying of brain cancer but said he wouldn’t “bargain with the Lord for an additional 15 seconds.”

“I have fulfilled what God’s called me to do, and now this is my reward, my blessing,” Toby, 65, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodway, for 35 years, said before he died Dec. 29, according to his friend Terry Graham, associate pastor and minister of education at the church near Waco.

What had begun with numbness in one of Toby’s hands in October developed into a diagnosis of incurable cancer. The news sent shockwaves through the church, but Toby asked his congregation not to pray for his health. Instead they were to pray that his death would be easy for him and his family. He was ready to see his Savior face to face.

“His tenure here was to teach us how to live according to God’s Word, and once he got that notice [of brain cancer], he taught us how to die according to God’s Word,” Graham said, “with very much hope, very much a sense of purpose and meaning and fulfillment.”

But that didn’t take away the pain for First, Woodway, members like Vicky Kendig, who called Toby a “wonderful person.”

“[Y]ou can’t go through something like that ... and then not mourn for him,” she said.

As the church, which is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was still coming to grips with Toby’s death, a second tragedy struck. Jim Gray, the church’s minister of senior adults who sang at Toby’s funeral, was killed in a car wreck Jan. 30.

“[It] was like a kick in the gut,” said Graham, who described Gray as a man with a pastor’s heart who

dearly loved the church’s senior adults.

Kendig found herself asking hard questions. “[Y]ou say, ‘Why and how much?’” she said. “How much more can we take?”

Chris Sammons, associate pastor for young marriages and discipleship at First, Woodway, said that while the church is still grieving for Toby and Gray, it has responded to the time of loss by seeking God’s face.

**“There’s not any question in our mind that we are not going through this by ourselves.”**

**Chris Sammons  
FBC Woodway**

“So we’ve gone through grief and we’ve continued to mourn, but even in the midst of our grieving and our mourning, God has proven Himself to be with us,” Sammons said. “And it’s hard to explain, but there’s not any question in our mind that we are not going through this by ourselves.”

Graham said the congregation is pulling together and supporting one another, which has left an impression on prospective new members.

“There’s a lot of strength here, and there’s a lot of depth to who we are,” Graham said. “Because you would first think that something like this happening would destroy

us and would send us into a tailspin of not knowing what to do or how to respond. But that has not been the case. In fact, it has been nothing but something to join us together, to bind our hearts together and to help us become stronger and more appreciative of one another.”

Through this time of loss and seeking God, Sammons said he — and the congregation as well, he believes — gained the understanding that God’s arm is not shortened because of difficult circumstances, and that He is faithful in the midst of pain.

“It’s not that any of us would have chosen to write the story this way,” Sammons said. “But at the same time, we know that God writes the best stories.” (BP)

## Alabama Baptist GIVING



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Photo courtesy of the Van Cliburn Foundation  
Van Cliburn (left) is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by George W. Bush in 2003.

# 'We have lost a giant'

## Friends of Baptist musician Cliburn say his faith was forefront

**N**ews reports of Van Cliburn's Feb. 27 death in Fort Worth, Texas, extolled the internationally acclaimed pianist as one of history's greatest classical musicians. Friends at Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, however, remember him as a great Baptist whose Christian faith came before his career.

Cliburn shot to fame at age 23 by winning the 1958 International Tchaikovsky Competition — and with it the hearts of Nikita Khrushchev and the Russian people. It was said the accomplishment did more to ease Cold War tensions than any diplomacy could.

The man who was 78 when bone cancer claimed his life also is recalled as a great humanitarian, philanthropist and friend. His generosity included a sizable donation to help Broadway Baptist purchase the Rildia Bee O'Bryan Cliburn Organ, with 191 ranks and 10,655 pipes — the largest organ in Texas — named after Cliburn's mother and completed in 1996.

"We have lost a giant," said longtime friend Tom Stoker, who was the minister of music at Cliburn's home church in Fort Worth in the 1990s. "People of this generation do not understand that Van did as much as anybody to thaw the Cold War — and he did that carrying Christ in his heart."

### Tchaikovsky competition

Later generations may not know it, but Cliburn was an international sensation in his 20s. It was six months after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik that he arrived in Moscow for the first-ever Tchaikovsky competition. With much the same fanfare that comes today with "American Idol," he captivat-

ed Russians and Americans alike as he won round after round.

He was met with a ticker tape parade in New York City upon his return and soon graced the cover of *Time Magazine* as "The Texan Who Conquered Russia."

Cliburn worshipped at Broadway since 1986 after moving to Fort Worth from New York City.

Stoker said Cliburn's faith wasn't the kind that came later in life, or even with his cancer diagnosis in August 2012. When studying at Juilliard he played the organ at Calvary Baptist Church, New York — and even lived upstairs from the church in the hotel it owned.

"He prayed before every concert, and there was never a meal in Van's house that was not blessed," Stoker said. "He lived his life out of his faith, and he lived life large."

Cliburn learned his approach to faith growing up Baptist in Texas and Louisiana, said Al Travis, director of music ministries and organist at Broadway.

Cliburn's father was the Sunday School superintendent at First Baptist Church, Kilgore, Texas, and his mother the organist.

"He spoke of his gratitude for growing up the son of parents who loved each other and for being raised in the church," Travis said. "He was grateful for the old hymns of the church."

Cliburn's love of music cannot be understood apart from his Baptist faith, because he saw his talent the same way he saw his money — as temporary gifts from God, Travis added.

In that way, Travis said, Cliburn's music and performances were his way of doing evangelism. "He had a sense of responsibility of sharing that gift with the world and thought his gift would make the world a more humane place." (ABP)

**"He lived his life out of his faith, and he lived life large."**

**Tom Stoker  
longtime friend**

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Islamic extremists shoot, kill Christian in Somalia

KISMAYO, Somalia — Suspected Islamic extremists in Somalia shot a Christian to death in February on the outskirts of the coastal city of Kismayo, sources said.

Two masked men killed Ahmed Ali Jimale, a 42-year-old father of four, Feb. 18 at 1 p.m. as he stood outside his house in Alanley village, near a police station, they said. The killers were suspected to be members of the Islamic extremist Al Shabaab, a rebel militia ousted from the area in November 2012 but still engaging in hit-and-run tactics. A few of the four rival clans in Kismayo, 328 miles southwest of Mogadishu, are said to be housing members of Al Shabaab.

A businessman, teacher and medical consultant well-known in the area, Jimale ran a pharmacy in Kismayo. He would give private lessons on medicine and first aid, and as an underground Christian — as are all Christians in Somalia — he highlighted the teaching with discussions comparing the Bible and the Quran, sources said.

The students would share these lessons with other children, and this teaching, along with his close work with a non-governmental organization that provides aid, appeared to have caught the attention of the Al Shabaab extremists, said a source who worked with Jimale but is no longer in the area.

### Egyptian court convicts boys of desecrating Quran

CAIRO, Egypt — A court in Egypt has quietly found two Coptic Christian boys guilty of "showing contempt for Islam" but only remanded them to the custody of their parents, an attorney for one of the children said.

In a case of alleged blasphemy that inflamed passions in provincial Egypt, a judge in Beni Suef, 62 miles south of Cairo, ruled the two boys guilty of desecrating pages of the Quran in spite of conflicting statements by the accuser and doubts about the functionally illiterate boys' capacity to identify Quranic verses, attorney Karam Ghoubril said.

The judge cited the boys' age in the light sentence; they were 9 and 10 at the time of the Sept. 30, 2012, incident. By issuing a guilty verdict in near secrecy Feb. 4 — the ruling came to light only the past week — and declining to hand down prison time or a fine, the judge seems to have averted foreign criticism while quelling the anger of Muslim villagers.

The same day the ruling was issued, the boys' lawyers appealed on grounds that the accuser's testimony contradicted statements he made to law enforcement officers. On Feb. 24, the court declined to hear the appeal, stating that it was unnecessary, and allowed the guilty verdict to stand.

### Vietnamese villagers beat families for new faith

DANANG, Vietnam — Newly converted Christians of the Sedang ethnic minority in Vietnam's Central Highlands were terrorized mid-February — their homes and personal property badly damaged or destroyed in four consecutive night raids and some of the faithful seriously injured from beatings in broad daylight, sources said. Since becoming Christians in the past year, five families in mountainous Kontum Province have reported constant harassment from villagers upset that they are no longer contributing to communal sacrifices and other practices because of their new faith. The attacks from Feb. 18 to Feb. 22 constituted a third wave of sustained violence since their conversion, leaving their property severely damaged and their lives threatened.

Attacks on the new Christians — who belong to a Christian Mission Church congregation in Ngoc La village, Mang Ri Commune, Tumorong District in northwestern Kontum Province — were primarily motivated by strong tensions within the ethnic group over the families leaving the "old ways." Ideologically opposed to Christianity, local Communist officials freely permit and even encourage such conflicts, sources said.

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