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## Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers respond to areas hit by March 18 storms

By Gary Hardin  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**A**labama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from 15 associations revved their chainsaws as a system of tornadoes, storms and straight-line winds toppled trees and power lines across portions of Alabama on March 18.

Ron Warren, state disaster relief chainsaw coordinator, directed Alabama's chainsaw response effort. Disaster relief chaplains deployed with all crews.

Jim Weeks of the Etowah Baptist Association team expressed his eagerness to serve: "Disaster relief work is my mission — anywhere, anytime."

Among the hardest hit areas were Etowah and DeKalb counties. Disaster relief chainsaw teams from Elmore, Etowah, Limestone, Madison and Morgan Baptist associations worked in the Southside area near Gadsden in Etowah County. These teams were housed by White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City.

In DeKalb County, teams from Sand Mountain, Tennessee River and DeKalb Baptist associations conducted chainsaw operations in DeSoto State Park near Fort Payne.

"We cleared fallen trees from roads and cabins in the park," said David Patty, Sand Mountain direc-

tor of missions and disaster relief team leader.

As the Marshall Baptist Association disaster relief team cut trees that had fallen on several homes in a neighborhood near Etowah High School in Attalla, disaster relief chaplain Debbie Reese went door-to-door in the neighborhood consoling and praying with affected homeowners. "I love to do this," Reese said.

In Calhoun and Cleburne counties, disaster relief volunteers were on site almost immediately after the storms. James Coley, Calhoun Baptist Association disaster relief

coordinator, guided the work of 12 chainsaw operators who cleared massive trees from houses and driveways in the Oxford area.

He was assisted by seven college students from Birmingham Southern College and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

### Help from students

"These students were on a different mission but called and said they could spare a half day to help us. They cleared brush and hauled tree limbs for us," Coley said.

Sammy Freeman, team leader  
(See 'It's ... a joy,' page 4)



Photo by Doug Rogers

Marshall Baptist Association disaster relief team volunteers work in the Attalla community in Etowah County after storms brought damage to areas across the state March 18.

# COMMENT

## The Hero of Easter

If the life of Jesus were written as a modern-day novel or made into a movie, Jesus would be portrayed as the classic tragic hero. He was a simple man whose insights confounded the wisest scholars of the day. He was a man of the people, associating with the poor, the needy and the outcasts. Yet His popularity threatened the political powerbrokers who guided society.

Jesus taught that love for God was to “love your brother as yourself,” but those closest to Him wanted to know when He would establish an earthly kingdom.

Jesus experienced the euphoria of adulation as thousands crowded His path, even laying palm branches in His way as He entered Jerusalem. But less than a week later the cheering crowds bellowed “crucify Him” as Jesus stood before the chief judge of the land. A trusted friend with whom He had spent about three years betrayed Him, and even though the law found Him innocent of all wrong, Jesus was executed to satisfy the whims of a bloodthirsty crowd.

At that point in the story, Jesus is a classic tragic figure. But three days after His death, Jesus rises from the grave. He is seen by His closest followers over a period of several weeks. Their lives are transformed and their hope for life renewed. Jesus is no longer a tragic victim. He is a superhero.

In addition to a hero, every story must have a villain. In this story some portray the powerbrokers of Jesus’ day as villains. Others point to the chief judge who caved in to manipulation in ordering Jesus put to death as the chief villain.

### False view of the story

For many the real villain is God. After all, it was God who caused all those dreadful things to happen to Jesus. God, in this story, is portrayed as an angry, vengeful Being who would not relent until Jesus had been bruised, battered, humiliated, tortured, nailed to a cross and pierced with a spear. God’s vindictiveness had



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

to be satisfied by the suffering of the tragic hero Jesus and that makes God the villain.

How sad that for some, this is the understanding of the Easter story — Jesus the hero and God the villain.

Such a story should grate on the spiritual sensitivities of every Christian because that is a false telling of what happened at Easter. The key to the story is the fact that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). Not only do Christians understand that “God was in Christ,” we understand that God was “reconciling the world to Himself.”

When the apostle Paul wrote these words he reflected a truth coming from the mouth of Jesus Himself. It was Jesus who declared, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30). It was Jesus who said His deeds of power were done to demonstrate “that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father” (John 10:38).

To the apostle Philip, Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Later Jesus added, “The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father living in Me who is doing this work.”

That is why the first Christians believed and taught “for God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him (Jesus)” (Col. 1:19).

Theologians call the fact of God dwelling

in Jesus the incarnation. The apostle John expressed it in the teaching that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). God made Himself known in Jesus.

That truth has been called the “very heart of Christianity.”

Not only was God in Christ, He was “reconciling the world to Himself.” It was God who took the initiative to restore the relationship between Himself and humankind that had been broken by sin. Mankind did not seek reconciliation. He had no plan for it and had no means to bridge the breach. It was God’s love that sent His one and only Son to save the world (John 3:16).

### Reconciling process

Not to be missed is the fact that God’s act of reconciling is not an isolated event in time but a process. The participle “reconciling” shows continuous action. It points toward God’s intended purpose, even before the beginning of time, to reconcile mankind to Himself. God made the plan. He decided the method. God not only made the demands for reconciliation but He freely gave all that He demanded. After all, only God can forgive sin (Luke 5:21).

In Christ, God Himself took on the sin of the world. He became the sin bearer. Again, Colossians 1:19–20 says, “For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him (Jesus), and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross.” First John 2:2 adds, “He (Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Sin is a dreadful thing. Amends could not be made by some good-natured indulgence. Only out of suffering could come true forgiveness and reconciliation that would change human character. Because “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” God became both the Priest and the Victim.

God made the demand. God paid the price. God gave hope when He raised Jesus from the dead. It is that same hope that empowers believers today. The apostle Paul wrote, “And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you” (Rom. 8:11).

That is why when early Christians looked back and pondered the dreadful things that happened around Easter, it made them think of the redeeming love of God. They did not think just about the love of a tragic figure called Jesus. In Him they saw the love of God and that is where one finds the real Hero of Easter.

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

#### RELIGION AND SCHOOLS

When our country was founded and most of our public education system was founded, there was little hostility toward Judeo-Christian values when our children were being taught. It hasn’t been that long when it was common for a teacher to ask children if they would like to “bless the lunch meal,” read a section of the Bible aloud in class (it’s a great piece of literature) or pray for the safety of student athletes prior to a football game, which is still legal. Today we find far too much hostility, even directions to teachers to

say Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas.

To suggest in the March 14 editorial that the new Alabama Accountability Act, which was badly handled because we expected the new leaders to operate differently from the ones that had been in charge for decades, is some terrible blow to religious liberty is simply overkill. To use a quote from recently appointed Justice Elena Kagan, whose past positions and current rulings have been hostile to our values, to defend that position leaves this lifelong Baptist dumbfounded. Certainly, the

Supreme Court reflects the moralities of our society in many respects, but that only highlights the failure of the church to be involved in the political process and to support leaders that uphold high Judeo-Christian standards while in office.

Today, the Alabama Accountability Act offers flexibility to a small number of students, in the worst schools, an opportunity to get a better education.

(See ‘Letters,’ page 21)





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

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Photo courtesy of Carli Ludlow

Pastor John Nicholson and members of Siloam Baptist Church, Marion, are one of the first Southern Baptist Convention churches in Alabama to accept and achieve the denomination’s current 1 percent challenge.

# ‘Aid of God’

## Marion’s Siloam Baptist accepts 1 percent challenge, plans to make it this year

By Carli Ludlow  
Student writer, Judson College

**S**iloam Baptist Church, Marion, is one of Alabama’s most historic churches and includes among its accolades the 1845 founding location of the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board).

Today’s church members plan to make history again, this time by being one of the first Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches in Alabama to accept and achieve the denomination’s current 1 percent challenge.

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page launched the 1 percent challenge in 2012 to encourage churches to give 1 percent more of undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program (CP).

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance also is promoting the challenge among Alabama Baptist churches but with a slightly different twist.

Alabama Baptist churches are encouraged to increase their CP giving by one-fourth percent each year for the next four years.

According to Jim Swedenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development, the challenge is “a way for churches to support 10,000 SBC missionaries around the globe. It’s a very small amount; however, if every church participates it will make a big difference.”

But Siloam Baptist decided to go ahead with the full 1 percent this year.

Pastor John Nicholson said, “We are a church committed to the Cooperative Program and hearing about the challenge gave us the opportunity to have this discussion in our church about taking on a financial challenge with the aid of God.”

For Siloam Baptist members, the challenge is about more than contributing to the CP, Nicholson said. It’s about keeping a promise. On the first Sunday in January the congregation sat in pews that date back to 1896 and heard about a longtime church member, the late Col. R.J. McDonald.

McDonald worked at Marion Military In-

stitute in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. He and his wife served the church for many decades during that time. McDonald filled almost every position there was to fill in the church from Sunday School teacher to deacon. McDonald and many others worked diligently over the years to raise the CP offering.

Years later hard financial times hit the church and members of the finance committee had to make cuts.

“We were having a really tough time. We cut everywhere we could without cutting salaries, and in the end we cut part of the CP,” said finance committee chair Roy Barnett.

McDonald was sorely disappointed, Barnett said. “To him all the hard work that had taken years to do was undone in less time.

“We hated to do it but promised to one day fix it,” Barnett said. “Today is that day.”

For more information on the 1 percent challenge, visit [www.alsbom.org/ministries/cp/quick-facts/one-percent-challenge/](http://www.alsbom.org/ministries/cp/quick-facts/one-percent-challenge/).

Share your church’s story on the 1 percent challenge. Email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or call 1-800-803-5201, Ext. 112. 📞





Photo by Doug Rogers

Marshall Baptist Association disaster relief team volunteers work to remove trees and debris from a home in the Attalla community of Etowah County on March 21.

## 'It's ... a joy to help'

### Disaster relief work shows 'hurting people the love of Jesus'

(continued from page 1)

for Cleburne Baptist Association, guided the work of a chainsaw team that cut trees in Oxford and Heflin. "We're just glad to be helping people in need," he said.

In Jasper, the storm left several of the town's major roads blocked by fallen trees.

The disaster relief chainsaw team from Walker Baptist Association, coordinated by Charles Sanders, cleared the roads quickly only a few hours after the storm. Then during the next several days, the group used their chainsaws to clear trees in two mobile home parks.

"Our team has worked hard but surprisingly we aren't tired. We're just a bunch of folks who want to help," Sanders said.

Renea Carol, staff associate for Friendship Baptist Association, reported that more than a dozen disaster relief volunteers from the association cleared trees and placed tarps on homes in the Highland Lake and Hayden communities in Blount County and along Highway 42.

Mark Craft, Friendship Association's disaster relief coordinator, noted the blessing that comes through disaster relief ministry. "Just being able to help people is a blessing.

Through this ministry we are showing hurting people the love of Jesus."

A team of 16 disaster relief volunteers from East Cullman Baptist Association cut up fallen trees in Brushy Pond, Crane Hill and Hanceville. Winfred Hanes, disaster relief team coordinator, reported the group had finished its assignments by March 20.

Glenn Pender, St. Clair Baptist Association disaster relief team coordinator, guided the work of seven chainsaw operators in cutting trees for residents in Ashville, Steele, Moody and Odenville.

Later in the week, the St. Clair team drove to the Kilpatrick area of DeKalb County to help the Tennessee River and Marshall teams

conduct chainsaw operations in a heavily damaged Hispanic mobile home park.

"Folks are glad to see us coming," Pender said. "It's just a joy to help people."

The disaster relief team from Birmingham Baptist Association worked to clear trees from homes and driveways in north Birmingham and Ensley, according to John Hayes, disaster relief coordinator.

As of March 21, additional heavy equipment had been dispatched to damaged areas to assist with debris removal. Two shower units with laundering equipment also were made available.

Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said the disaster relief effort would extend into the week of March 24. "We continue to discover new pockets of damage," he said.

Johnson also expressed

thanks to Alabama Baptists for their generous giving to the 2012 special disaster relief offering. "The equipment we were able to purchase through this offering has increased our productivity fivefold."

April 21 has been chosen as the date for the 2013 Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Offering. The suggested church offering goal is \$1 per member. 🙏



Photo by Gary Hardin

Bobby Bailey, a volunteer on the Cleburne Baptist Association disaster relief team, uses a chainsaw to help remove a fallen tree in the Heflin area March 19.

## Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

### Ky. Baptist children's home settlement 'premature'?

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A long-running legal battle over taxpayer funding of a Baptist children's home in Kentucky may have ended with a March 12 settlement of a 13-year-old lawsuit filed by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Kentucky's government agreed to change its child-care system to ensure that faith-based groups that contract with the state do not pressure children in their care to participate in religious services and that they give religious materials only to those who want them.

The dispute started in 1998 when Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children (KBHC) — now known as Sunrise Children's Services — fired a therapist and residential counselor named Alicia Pedreira after discovering that she was a lesbian.

Along with protecting against religious coercion, the settlement requires that prior to placing a child with a religiously affiliated child-care agency or foster home, the state will inform children and parents of the provider's religious affiliation.

But Sunrise Children's Services released a statement describing Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the ACLU's declaration of victory as "premature."

"Recent rulings by the Supreme Court and federal appeals courts make it absolutely clear that a government may provide benefits to faith-based entities without violating the Establishment Clause if the benefits are available to secular and religious entities alike," said John Sheller, Sunrise's attorney.

Sunrise is an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC). KBC Executive Director Paul Chitwood supported the ministry in opposing the settlement.

"The time for Kentucky Baptists to rally behind Sunrise Children's Services through prayer, financial support and by becoming foster parents is now," Chitwood said in a statement.



CHITWOOD

### Weathersby to be first African-American EC vice president

NASHVILLE — Ken Weathersby will begin April 1 as vice president for convention advancement with the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee (EC), the first African-American to hold an EC vice presidential position.

Weathersby most recently served as presidential ambassador for ethnic church relations with the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

Weathersby will work in his newest role to increase ethnic participation and grow relationships with demographic subsets within the SBC such as young ministers and pastors of small churches and megachurches, along with overseeing the EC's Global Evangelical Relations ministry.

Weathersby in 1999 was the first African-American pastor to hold a full-time associate professorship at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was director of the seminary's Cecil B. Day Center for Church Planting and director of the Nehemiah Project, which steered seminary graduates into church planting.

### Hammond leaves EC to be FBC Alpharetta's pastor

NASHVILLE — W. Thomas Hammond Jr. has announced his resignation from his vice presidency with the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee (EC) to accept the full-time pastorate of First Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Ga.

Hammond had worked since March 24, 2012, as vice president for convention advancement and officially left the post March 15.

"Most everyone knows that Thomas Hammond is one of my dearest friends in this world," EC President Frank Page said. "Having faithfully served NAMB in their evangelism division for almost 15 years, Thomas brought a life and excitement to our Executive Committee staff."



HAMMOND



IMB photos

# Thinking of going?



Each Christian has an individual responsibility to take the gospel to people who haven't had the opportunity to hear it, several Alabama pastors say. Pockets of lostness are big in places like Bangladesh (above), India (left) and the Philippines (below). The stories on pages 6-7 provide information on how you can respond to the call to take the gospel overseas.



## How to get started if you feel called to 'grand global mission'

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**I**t's hard to go back to normal after this." A man said that to Pastor Bill Brown as he walked out of Beulah Baptist Church, Muscadine, in Cleburne Baptist Association on a recent Sunday morning. Brown had just given a charge to live life as Jesus Christ asked His followers to live it — to be "a real Christian." And that, he said, means making disciples at home and around the world. "Real Christians can't just tack church and Jesus onto their lives. He has to be their whole life and be in charge of all of it," Brown said to the church March 10 during the church's missions emphasis month. "What that means is we live every aspect of our lives for Him. What that means is we do what He told us to do, and we make disciples. And that means we can't keep the gospel to ourselves."

The man who responded at Beulah Baptist isn't the only one sensing a pull to live a different kind of life. People all across Alabama and the United States are expressing a desire to live a life of disciple making, whether that be in North America or in an overseas context, and are seeking to be equipped in carrying that out.

More than 100,000 participated in a Multiply gathering in November hosted by The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, and simulcast nationwide to equip Christ followers to share their faith and disciple others to follow Jesus, too.

David Platt, Brook Hills' senior pastor, said during the event, "Look back at the moments when the gospel has advanced most rapidly, and you'll see that it was when the whole church got a hold of each individual's responsibility to be a disciple

(See 'Read,' page 7)

*You've decided to pursue — or at least research — going overseas. Where do you start? There are so many avenues, like going on a short-term trip with your church, going for a longer stint with an overseas missions or humanitarian organization, getting a job as a businessperson overseas or getting a job transfer to a different country (see story, page 7). But where do you start to figure out the right route for you?*

### 1. Start with your church.

Meet with your church leadership. They can help affirm and explore your call with you. Al Jackson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, said the first thing he does when a member expresses a desire to go overseas is schedule a time to sit down and talk about it. Your church will be your primary support and sender as you prepare and explore different avenues for overseas service.

### 2. Go on a missions trip.

Sign up for a trip your church has planned to take the gospel overseas and to get your feet wet in cross-cultural work. If your church doesn't have a trip planned, contact your association or the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, which can connect you with a team through Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections. For more information, visit [www.alsbom.org/ministries/global-missions/alabama-acts-18-connections](http://www.alsbom.org/ministries/global-missions/alabama-acts-18-connections).

### 3. Consider your personal options.

Do you have a skill that would allow you to go overseas without the financial support of a missions-sending organization? Will your business allow you a transfer to an international office, or can you do an exchange program through the school or university where you teach? Can you get a job as a doctor or nurse or engineer in another country?

If any of these options are available to you, they often offer access to countries and people that "missionaries" have

# Where do I begin?

trouble getting to. The IMB's Marketplace Advance initiative can offer team support, training and mentoring for you if you are interested in going overseas to make disciples in this way. (See story, page 7.)

### 4. Consider partnering with an organization.

There is a wide variety of organizations with teams in place overseas and a number of ways you can get plugged in. A few options are:

#### ► International Mission Board (IMB)

The IMB is the missions-sending agency of the Southern Baptist Convention and has nearly 5,000 representatives on the field. Thanks to the support of Southern Baptists, it offers full financial support for those it sends overseas, with the exception of retirement-age applicants (age 50 plus), who receive partial funding.

More than half of the current long-term jobs are for church planters or strategists — those who find ways to start a new work among an unengaged, unreached people group. Other needs range from media and accounting professionals to agriculturalists.

For more information, visit [going.imb.org](http://going.imb.org).

To make initial contact with the IMB about the possibility of future service, visit <https://secure.imb.org/InfoForm> and click on "Create new form."

To speak with an IMB consultant or to ask questions about overseas missions service, call 1-800-999-3113, Ext. 1278.

#### ► Pioneers

Pioneers is a Christian organization that "mobilizes teams to glorify God among unreached peoples by initiating church-planting movements in partnership with local churches."

That task can "look a thousand different ways depending on the country and people group you're working with," said Jillian Combs, Pioneers director of recruitment. It ranges from orphan care to IT work among the upper class.

The organization seeks to mobilize people with a variety of skill sets who have a heart for church planting to join Pioneers' approximately 2,600 representatives on the field.

For more information or to make contact with a missions mentor, call 407-382-6000 or visit [pioneers.org](http://pioneers.org).

#### ► Samaritan's Purse

An evangelical Christian organization that works in "crisis areas of the world," Samaritan's Purse offers opportunities to get involved in projects from construction to feeding to livestock to medical ministry.

To browse a list of projects and open positions, or for more information, visit [www.samaritanpurse.org](http://www.samaritanpurse.org).

#### ► Crossworld

Crossworld is an organization focusing on discipleship and offering a variety of assignment length options from a short-term missions trip to a long-term career. They are looking for a variety of skill sets ranging from business professionals to teachers to football players to graphic designers.

For more information or to browse available opportunities, visit [www.crossworld.org/go](http://www.crossworld.org/go).

(Compiled from various sources)

## How can I prepare?

**Experience.** Go on an overseas volunteer trip. Be involved in missions projects locally.

Learn about the nations. Do research on people groups. Pray. Become involved in ministry to internationals in the U.S. or abroad. Many have found English as a Second Language training and experience to be very helpful.

**Discipleship.** Look for opportunities to learn more about discipleship. Be a disciple maker in your everyday life right where you are.

**Evangelism training.** The primary role of a missionary is to share Christ, leading people to make a commitment to Christ. Be trained in how to better share your faith and then put it into practice in your daily life.

**Education.** If needed, begin working on your college and seminary requirements. You may want to begin working on some biblical, missiological and theological training.

**Stewardship.** Be a good steward of your financial resources. A missions-sending organization may have a debt limit. (The International Mission Board, for example, does.)

**Physical health.** Live a healthy lifestyle. This prepares you for any health requirements.

(Source: International Mission Board)

**What are your gifts?**

**EUROPE**  
Administrator/  
planner

**EAST ASIA**  
English teacher

**NORTH AFRICA**  
Livestock  
veterinarian

**ASIA**  
IT professional

**AFRICA**  
Goat project  
manager

**EAST AFRICA**  
Midwife

Missions can look 1,000 different ways

Graphic by Lauren C. Grim



IMB photo

Businesspeople from IT professionals to nurses to engineers who can get jobs in other countries have unprecedented access to unreached people in the growing middle class, Timothy Hostetler said.

## Business professionals have open door to unreached populations

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

One are the days when “missionary” and “businessman” were considered two separate professions. Using business as a gateway into a foreign context is “the next wave of missions,” said Timothy Hostetler, an International Mission Board (IMB) representative who works with Marketplace Advance, an initiative aimed at empowering businesspeople to share their faith overseas through their professions.

IMB President Tom Elliff said the initiative is “IMB’s means of challenging corporate leaders and employees, as well as other marketplace professionals, to place their lives, businesses, resources, international connections and their energies on the altar for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.”

Not only that, Hostetler said — it may actually finish the assignment believers have to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

“It may very well be the last wave of missions,” he said. “This may allow us to finish the task.”

The idea of Marketplace Advance is to equip businesspeople to share the gospel overseas through their job rather than by being appointed and supported by the IMB.

“Our role is to encourage businesspeople and cheer them on, as well as offer them team support by connecting them with mentors on the ground in the city where they would be working,” Hostetler said. “When somebody calls us and says, ‘Hey, my job is transferring me to such and such a place,’ often we can get them connected with some local church planters to help them.”

A job transfer is a great avenue to reach an unreached area, especially for the older, more experienced businessperson, because while students are often the ones wanting to go, companies often aren’t as willing to transfer their more inexperienced em-

ployees to their overseas offices, Hostetler said.

“Somebody with experience could put in for an international assignment — IT professionals, corporate leaders, medical personnel, artists, students, teachers and engineers,” Hostetler said.

There is ample opportunity for a spouse and family to get involved too in the community and schools, he said.

This sort of strategy targets a sector of people not well reached by traditional missions methods, Hostetler said.

“It’s hard to intersect their lives (the growing middle class) with the methods we are normally using,” he said, noting that the middle class often works long hours and goes straight home, so there isn’t much opportunity to reach them outside of the offices where they work.

“We recognize that there is a growing segment ... not being reached with the gospel,” he said. “How do you get to them? Through the marketplace.”

If you’re thinking of making disciples overseas by getting a job transfer or a business-related job in another country, Hostetler recommends preparing by making disciples in the U.S. first.

“Whatever it is that you think you’re going to do overseas, do it first here,” he said. “If you’re trying to do something there that you’re not doing here, that’s going to be very difficult.”

If your church is starting a church plant somewhere, ask how you can get involved, and if possible, find a way to engage with international professionals right where you are, Hostetler said.

And above all, start making disciples in your everyday life, he said.

For more information about Marketplace Advance, visit [imbgs.com](http://imbgs.com).

EDITOR’S NOTE — Hostetler’s name has been changed for security reasons. ☞

**“We recognize that there is a growing segment ... not being reached with the gospel. How do you get to them? Through the marketplace.”**

**Timothy Hostetler  
International Mission Board**

**“Go on a missions trip as soon as possible and get some cross-cultural experience.”**

**Pastor Al Jackson  
Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn**

## Read up, cultivate walk with God, Jackson says

(continued from page 5)  
and make disciples. We are all to be involved in a grand global mission.”

Al Jackson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, said it’s “a pastor’s delight” when a church member says he or she is feeling led toward missions work.

When the person asks him for advice on what to do next, Jackson plans a time to sit down and talk and “develop a personal plan for them to move from where they are to where God wants them to be.”

The first thing that is essential, he said, is to “maintain a very close walk with Jesus Christ.”

Prayer, fasting, Bible reading, Scripture memory and service all have to be functioning well and adding up to a vibrant life of faith, he said.

“If you miss that one, all my other suggestions are moot,” Jackson said.

But if that one’s in place, his next suggestion is to get a passport.

“Go on a missions trip as soon as possible and get some cross-cultural experience,” Jackson said.

These days, there are lots of

ways to go, he said. (See stories, page 6.)

“Go for a week, go for a summer, go for a semester. See for yourself what it is like to serve in an overseas context,” he said.

Jackson also encourages folks to read missionary biographies — William Carey, Lottie Moon, Adoniram Judson and other heroes.

“That will put fuel on the fire,” Jackson said.

He also recommends reading John Piper’s “Let the Nations Be Glad,” as well as “Operation World,” which gives guidance on how to pray through all the nations of the world in a year.

“Take it seriously,” Jackson said. “Read up. Read ‘Operation World.’ Adopt a people group. Get a map on the wall and see it often. Get involved in cross-cultural ministry right where you are.”

And then, he said, take the next step toward following God to spread the gospel in an overseas context.

What are some practical ways to take the next step? See the other stories on pages 6–7 for information on disciple making and avenues to serve on a short- or long-term basis in a missions context. ☞



IMB photo

The need is great for people to take the gospel to South Asia and other parts of the world.

# Midst of crisis

## Conditions deteriorate in Syria; Southern Baptists help provide humanitarian relief

**C**onditions for civilians in Syria have deteriorated so badly that Southern Baptist humanitarian leaders have decided they must expand relief efforts inside the country.

At the same time, relief workers in neighboring countries have seen a “staggering escalation” of refugees streaming out of Syria — and the international community is delivering only a fraction of the aid they promised when the crisis began nearly two years ago.

“After nearly two years of violence, over 4 million people are in need of assistance,” said Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response (BGR). “The number of refugees from Syria is approaching 1 million, with 80 percent of those being women and children. IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Syria are now approaching 3 million.”

### 10 percent jump

The United Nations refugee agency said March 14 that more than 121,000 refugees registered in just one week, a jump of more than 10 percent. Just a week earlier, the U.N. announced the number of registered refugees had reached 1 million — an average of 8,000 a day in February.

“This represents a staggering escalation,” U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said, according to news reports.

“Host fatigue” in surrounding countries where refugees have fled is combining with dwindling resources inside the country to fuel an alarming situation, Palmer added.

“In Syria, food is in short supply, as well as basic necessities, such as medicines and fuel,” Palmer said. “A field partner recently made a trip into the affected areas and witnessed heartbreaking scenes of human suffering and darkness. In one area, a package of seven pieces of pita bread, a staple food, was selling for \$4. In another area, one liter of fuel was going for \$10 — the equivalent of about \$40 per gallon.”

While the bulk of Southern Baptist relief work with Syrians has been conducted in surrounding countries, now additional efforts will be added inside the country, Palmer said.

“We have had four project sites, with three being outside the country and one inside,” he said. “Now, because of the deepening crisis in the country, we feel compelled to mobilize more resources through trusted partners inside Syria, while still supporting work in the refugee areas in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.”

During the past 18 months, Southern Baptists have expended nearly \$300,000 in Syrian refugee relief, with most of that



BP photo

After nearly two years of violence in Syria, more than 4 million people need assistance. The majority of the nearly 1 million refugees are women and children.

providing food, shelter and cold-weather needs. With the crisis intensifying, Palmer said he expects as much as \$400,000 will be needed over the next few months, with \$250,000 being directed toward relief efforts inside Syria. Those initiatives will focus on staple foods, medicine and hygiene supplies, shelter, heaters and oil, clothing, blankets, mattresses, carpets and opportunities to help families start micro-businesses.

Work inside Syria will be dangerous and BGR does not at this time project using many volunteers in the country. There is, however, “a growing potential” for volunteers working with Syrian refugees in Jordan, Palmer said.

Even with all the turmoil and suffering in the region, one positive note can be seen, Palmer added.

“In the midst of the crisis, we are seeing a widespread seeking of God. People without hope are turning to God for hope,” Palmer said. “One businessman, who is now living in a hovel, told a BGR partner that he gave thanks for the crisis, because if it weren’t for what was happening, he would have never thought about God.”

Palmer urged people to pray for relief workers and partners helping with the response and especially for the Syrians who are suffering.

“It is a very complex situation. No one knows who to trust,” Palmer said. “They just know their families need help in these desperate times.”

To donate to BGR’s Syria relief fund, go to [www.baptistglobalresponse.com/](http://www.baptistglobalresponse.com/) donate and select the “Syria Relief” option. (BP)



BP photo

Staple foods like these will be at the heart of the new Southern Baptist relief initiative inside Syria, along with medicine and hygiene supplies, shelter, heaters and oil, clothing, blankets, mattresses, carpets and opportunities to help families start micro-businesses.

***“In the midst of the crisis, we are seeing a widespread seeking of God. People without hope are turning to God for hope.”***

**Jeff Palmer**  
Baptist Global Response

**FOCUS on One Mission**

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

**ONE MISSION:**  
The Great Commission

**ONE PROGRAM:**  
The Cooperative Program

**MANY MINISTRIES:**  
Great Commission Ministries



# ONE Mission

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



**REMAINING PRAYER GATHERINGS**

(listed by county, not association)

**Baldwin, three gatherings on April 16**

**10 a.m.**, Baldwin County Courthouse, 312 Courthouse Square, Bay Minette  
**1 p.m.**, Baldwin County Courthouse, 1100 Fairhope Ave., Fairhope  
**3 p.m.**, Baldwin County Satellite Courthouse, 201 East Section Ave., Foley

**Barbour, two gatherings on April 16**

**9 a.m.**, Barbour County Courthouse, 303 East Broad St., Eufaula  
**1 p.m.**, Barbour County Courthouse, 201 Court Square, Clayton

**Blount, May 2, Noon**

Blount County Courthouse, Onenota

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

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

**Cherokee, April 16, Noon**

Cherokee County Courthouse, 100 Main Street, Centre

**Choctaw, April 9, 3 p.m.**

Choctaw County Courthouse, 100 West Main St., Butler

**Clarke, April 9, 1 p.m.**

Clarke County Courthouse, 114 Court St., Grove Hill

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

Clay County Courthouse, 25 Court Square, Ashland

**Cleburne, April 4, Noon**

Cleburne County Courthouse, 120 Vickery St., Heflin

**Dale, April 11, 10 a.m.**

Dale County Courthouse, 1 Court Square, Ozark

**Etowah, April 26, 11 a.m.**

Etowah County Courthouse, 800 Forest Ave., Gadsden

**Henry, two gatherings on April 2**

**10:30 a.m.**, Henry County Courthouse, 101 Court Square, Abbeville  
**1:30 p.m.**, Headland National Bank, 18057 U.S. Highway 431 South, Headland

**Lowndes, April 28, 2 p.m.**

Lowndes County Courthouse, South Washington St., Hayneville

**Marshall, two gatherings on April 18**

**Noon**, Marshall County Courthouse, 425 Gunter Ave., Guntersville  
**Noon**, Marshall County Courthouse, 116 West Main, Albertville

**Mobile, April 8, 2 p.m.**

Mobile County Courthouse, 205 Government St., Mobile

**Pike, April 4, 10 a.m.**

Pike County Courthouse, 120 West Church St., Troy

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

Randolph County Courthouse, 1 Main St. South, Wedowee

**Talladega, April 2, 1 p.m.**

Talladega County Courthouse, 1 Court Square, Talladega

**Washington, April 9, 10 a.m.**

Washington County Courthouse, 1 Court St., Chatom



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

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

**REGIONAL PRAYER EVENTS**

One Night Prayer Rally, April 12, 6 p.m., First Baptist Church, Albertville  
 One Night Prayer Rally, April 26, 6 p.m., Hill Crest, Anniston

**60 DAYS OF PRAYER CONTINUES THROUGH APRIL 27**

Prayer and devotion guide and other resources are available online at [www.prayingacrossalabama.org](http://www.prayingacrossalabama.org) or by contacting Debbie Dickey, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, (334) 613-2218, [ddickey@alsbom.org](mailto:ddickey@alsbom.org).

**FOCUS on One Mission**

# SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 15-17, 2013  
Shocco Springs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Youth Evangelism Conference | August 2-3, 2013

# MORE THAN A GAME?

Wright Center, Samford University | \$20 per person


[www.onemissionstudents.org](http://www.onemissionstudents.org)

**SAVE** the DATE




**youthevangelismconference**

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

DEADLINE FOR AUDITION FORM/CD:  MAY 13

## ROCKSOLID CHRISTIAN COVER BAND

**RockSolid Christian Cover Band is an auditioned group of young people, grades 9-12, from Alabama Baptist churches. Vocalists; a percussionist (trap set); keyboardists; rhythm, lead and bass guitarists; and horn players will be selected from the audition CDs and applications. This group performs a wide variety of secular and contemporary Christian music and will be touring in Alabama June 28 - July 4 and July 14-15, 2013.**

*For other information, please go online to [www.alsbom.org/rocksolid](http://www.alsbom.org/rocksolid) or contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, [khibbs@alsbom.org](mailto:khibbs@alsbom.org), or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, [scleveland@alsbom.org](mailto:scleveland@alsbom.org).*

## Mix Music Camp

Monday through Friday, July 15-19, SHOCCO SPRINGS

**THREE TRACKS:**

- Completed grades 3-5, 6-7 and 8-10

**NEXT BEST RATE DEADLINE:** May 1, for \$270 per person

**AFTER MAY 1:** Cost is \$280 per person

**INCLUDES:** Uncontrollable fun and recreation, unforgettable worship, life-long friendships and awesome music!

**REGISTRATION:** [www.MixMusicCamp.org](http://www.MixMusicCamp.org)

*FOR OTHER INFORMATION, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, [cparrish@alsbom.org](mailto:cparrish@alsbom.org).*



**FOCUS on One Mission**

# WHAT IS CAMPER'S ON MISSION?

Wednesday through Saturday, April 24-27



## Alabama COM Spring Rally • National Peanut Festival Fair Grounds, Dothan

Campers on Mission (COM) is a national fellowship of Christian campers who share their faith while they camp. Though sponsored by Southern Baptists, membership is open to Christian campers of all denominations.

The Alabama Chapter of COM sponsors a fall rally and a spring rally and more than 20 mission projects a year. Visitors who are interested in possible membership are welcome to attend the rally.

Friday night at 6:30 p.m. is a time of project reports. This would be an ideal time to visit.

What do Campers on Mission do? Projects include state fairs, motor speedways, sewing, nursing home ministry, puppets, prayer walks, Seaman Center, association camps, church construction and disaster relief.

Who can join Campers on Mission? Any adult: single or family, young or older. COM is family-friendly and provides a great way to experience the relaxation of vacation with the satisfaction of a mission project. It is a great pathway to become an on-mission family.

To become a member or for other information, please check online at [www.alabamacom.org](http://www.alabamacom.org).

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

Music Leadership Conference

# children's choir

July 12-13 Summit

## FRAMED!



An exciting, hands-on training that will allow you to

- Discover new ways to make choir a favorite for kids!
- Learn how you can use games to enhance your music program.
- Create an ideal opportunity for children to experience worship.
- Network with outstanding clinicians from across the U.S.
- Network with other people in similar situations.

**Cost:** \$90 per person by May 1; \$100 per person after May 1 (includes lodging, three meals, eight sessions and dessert buffet)

**Registration:** [www.alsbom.org/children-summit](http://www.alsbom.org/children-summit)

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, [scleveland@alsbom.org](mailto:scleveland@alsbom.org).

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

SEND » NORTH AMERICA

# CHURCH GROWTH AND REVITALIZATION CONFERENCE

May 21, 2013 Montgomery, AL

with **Johnny Hunt**

**DETAILS TO FOLLOW**



Sharing Christ in Crisis



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions



# LAST CALL

## April 5-6, 2013 State Disaster Relief Training Shocco Springs

"Involving Southern Baptists in Disaster Relief" (ISBIDR) is a prerequisite class for all specialized Disaster Relief training.

**www.SBDR.org**  
Your Connection  
to Disaster Relief

ISBIDR class will begin at 1 p.m. Friday.



The Cry Heard

**Conferences:** Mass Feeding • Cleanup/Recovery/Chainsaw • Disaster Assessment • Shower Unit • Child Care • Communications (ham radio license required) • Disaster Relief Chaplaincy (three-day event/April 4-6)

Re-credentialing courses will be offered for those only needing to renew badges in areas of Mass Feeding • Cleanup/Recovery/Chainsaw • Shower

**Cost:** \$80 per person (double occupancy; includes lodging, meals, program fee). For chaplain training, cost is \$139 per person (double occupancy; includes lodging, meals, program fee).

**Registration Procedure for All Classes:**

1. Each conferee must register online to reserve training space and materials. Go to [www.sbdr.org/training](http://www.sbdr.org/training) and complete the online registration form.

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

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

Response Assured



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



## Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Offering • April 21, 2013

# HELPING REBUILD SHARING CHRIST IN CRISIS



Funds given through the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Offering will enable the State Board of Missions, in partnership with churches and associations, to support and equip disaster relief responders and response efforts, including the purchase of needed equipment.

**STATEWIDE GOAL: \$200,000**  
Suggested church goal: \$1 per member

For resources, call 1.800.264.1225, ext. 273, or visit [www.sbdr.org/disasterrelieff offering](http://www.sbdr.org/disasterrelieff offering).

# Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program

BY MARK WAKEFIELD  
State Missionary/Chaplaincy  
Ministry Strategist

There are many ways to accomplish important tasks.

For Southern Baptists, we have discovered the best way is to do our work together. For many years our goal has been to accomplish our mission together.

I am proud to be a part of that mindset.

As a result of Cooperative Program ministries, I was able to attend a Baptist college and receive an outstanding education. I attended a seminary where graduate education cost much less than other seminaries.

As a lay person, a pastor and a church staff person, I have been quite honored to be known as a Southern Baptist. Together we make it possible for missionaries to serve well and without the stress of raising support. Together we care for children in our Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Together we are able to address social and moral issues in our state and nation. Together is vital to Cooperative Program ministries.

When I have had the opportunity to travel to other states and attend Southern Baptist churches, I have found myself at home because of a common purpose and heritage. What a blessing it is to fellowship with other Christians in places so different and yet so similar. We are family.

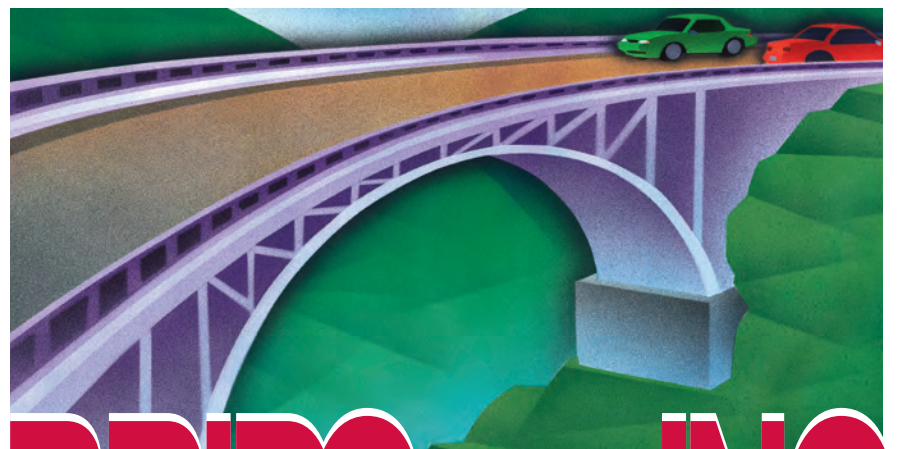
When a church where I served needed resources in order to better do our mission,

we had other churches, our Baptist association, our Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and our Southern Baptist Convention to assist us in doing our mission. Shared ministry through shared resources has proven to be such a positive aspect of my Christian experience. Sharing is vital to Cooperative Program ministries.

I now have the high honor of serving as one of your state missionaries. The work of your State Board of Missions is a work Alabama Baptists do together to assist each other in carrying out the Great Commission. No one church has all the resources. One church cannot send the many thousands of servants around the globe to have a constant presence for Christ.

Through the Cooperative Program we are able to do exactly that. You and I are partners to do together what we cannot do alone. People who are committed to the Great Commission will do missions, pray for missions and give to missions. How much more we can do together than alone!

*State Missionary Mark Wakefield serves in the Global Missions Office. He joined the State Board of Missions staff in February 2013 after having served as associate pastor of Moulton Baptist Church. To contact him, please call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 267, or (334) 613-2267, mwakefield@alsbom.org.*



## BRIDGING THE GAP

### Understanding the Challenges Our Students Will Face in College & How to Prepare Them

Thursday, April 25, 2013, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

**Cost:** \$10 per person (includes conference, lunch and materials)

A Drive-In Youth Ministry Training Event presented by the Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries, featuring **Tommy McGregor**. Tommy is the author of *Lost in Transition: Becoming Spiritually Prepared For College* and founder of The TransMission, a ministry that helps guide students through their senior year of high school and into their first semester of college.

#### Registration:

[www.onemissionstudents.org/bridgingthegap](http://www.onemissionstudents.org/bridgingthegap)

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Lydia Patterson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 275, or (334) 613-2275, [lpatterson@alsbom.org](mailto:lpatterson@alsbom.org).

# SENIOR ADULT EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

May 6, 2013  
9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Heritage Baptist Church,  
Perry Hill Road, (185, exit 4)  
Montgomery



BOBBY WELCH



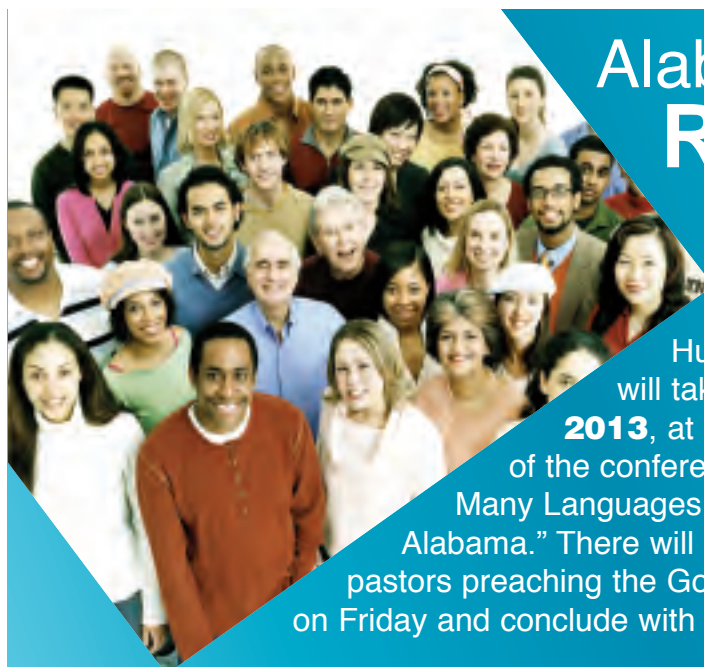
DALE HUFF



DANIEL WILSON

**FREE ADMISSION** | No registration necessary  
For more information call 1-800-264-1225,  
ext. 245, or email Pam Davis at  
[pdavis@alsbom.org](mailto:pdavis@alsbom.org). | (lunch on your own)

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



## Alabama Human Relations Conference

The 45th Annual Alabama Human Relations Conference will take place on **April 26-27, 2013**, at Shocco Springs. The theme of the conference is "Celebrating the Many Languages of Preaching the Gospel in Alabama." There will be seven different language pastors preaching the Gospel. It will begin with lunch on Friday and conclude with lunch at noon on Saturday.

RESERVATIONS/COSTS: **1-800-280-1105**

# INTERESTED IN BEING AN ALABAMA BAPTIST BOYS CAMP COUNSELOR?

JUNE 19 - JULY 27, 2013

## Characteristics and qualifications of a camp counselor:

- Male
- Spiritual maturity
- Love for the outdoors
- Missions-minded
- Desire to work with boys in grades 4-6 or 7-12

## Training:

Everything you need to know about campcraft, the ropes course and camp activities will be taught in pre-camp orientation.

## Pay:

Besides eternal rewards, you will earn between \$200 and \$400 per week. All your meals and lodging costs will be covered.

## Application:

[www.alsbom.org/ra](http://www.alsbom.org/ra)

## For other information:

Please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens (camp director) at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, [sstephens@alsbom.org](mailto:sstephens@alsbom.org).



# 2013 REGIONAL AND STATE ALABAMA BIBLE DRILLS

<b>North</b>	<b>April 18, Thursday</b>
East Highland BC, 1030 Main St. E., Hartselle	
<b>South East</b>	<b>April 18, Thursday</b>
Hillcrest BC, 500 Alberta St., Enterprise	
<b>South West</b>	<b>April 18, Thursday</b>
FBC Satsuma, Old Hwy. 43 & Pine Ave., Satsuma	
<b>North Central</b>	<b>April 21, Sunday</b>
FBC Pelham, 2867 Pelham Pkwy., Pelham	
<b>South Central</b>	<b>April 21, Sunday</b>
Dalraida BC, 3838 Wares Ferry Rd., Montgomery	
<b>West Central</b>	<b>April 22, Monday</b>
FBC Demopolis, 109 S. Strawberry Ave., Demopolis	
<b>North West</b>	<b>April 23, Tuesday</b>
FBC Tuscaloosa, 721 Greensboro Ave., Tuscaloosa	
<b>North East</b>	<b>April 23, Tuesday</b>
Meadowbrook BC, 1125 Meadowbrook Ct., Oxford	
<b>State</b>	<b>April 27, Saturday</b>
Taylor Road BC, 1685 Taylor Rd., Montgomery	

**Registration:** Online registration for Regional Drills is required by April 11, 2013:  
[www.alsbom.org/bibledrillregistration](http://www.alsbom.org/bibledrillregistration)

**Onsite check-in times:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday at 3:30 p.m. \* Drills begin at 4 p.m.  
 Sunday at 1:30 p.m. \* Drills begin at 2 p.m.

**Registration for State Drill:** Noon. Drills will begin at 12:30 p.m.

2013 LEAFLETS AND VERSE CARDS ARE POSTED AT  
[WWW.ALSBOM.ORG/BIBLEDRILLS](http://WWW.ALSBOM.ORG/BIBLEDRILLS).

*For additional information, please contact: State Missionary Sonya Tucker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 271, or (334) 613-2271, [stucker@alsbom.org](mailto:stucker@alsbom.org) or Ministry Assistant Shari Holley at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 313, or (334) 613-2313, [sholley@alsbom.org](mailto:sholley@alsbom.org).*

## FAITH-FOCUSED SECURITY TRAINING

### LEVEL A

**Saturday, April 27, 2013**

**8 a.m.-3 p.m.**

**Dawson Memorial Baptist Church  
 1114 Oxmoor Rd., Birmingham**

Led by Sentinel Trainers certified by Fort Sherman Academy. FSA is a recognized leader in faith-based training for missions organizations. Topics will include travel security, code of conduct, crime survival, basic crisis policy and more, all from a faith-based perspective.



#### THIS TRAINING IS:

- highly recommended for all churches taking mission trips.
- required for churches who participate in State Board of Missions projects.

**COST:** \$40 per participant (non-refundable, includes lunch and training)

**REGISTRATION:** limited to 100 participants. Go online to [www.alsbom.org/ffst](http://www.alsbom.org/ffst).

*(Another identical training opportunity will be offered August 29 in Huntsville, location to be announced.)*

### LEVEL B+ — CAPTIVE SAINT

**April 26-28, 2013**

**Dawson Memorial Baptist Church  
 1114 Oxmoor Rd., Birmingham**

Led by Fort Sherman Academy. Four sessions of classroom instruction with role plays, designed for pastors, ministers of missions, church staff, mission team leaders and other mission leaders who travel or lead mission teams to elevated risk locations. Sessions will cover security, code of conduct, crime survival, dealing with unfriendly governments, detention and questioning. Friday session, 6-9 p.m.; Saturday sessions, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. and 6-9 p.m.; Sunday session, 1:30-5 p.m.

#### THIS TRAINING IS:

- recommended for all church staff/lay leadership leading volunteer mission teams.
- required for all leaders who participate in State Board of Mission projects.

**COST:** \$200 per participant (non-refundable, includes meals and materials)

**REGISTRATION:** limited to 50 participants. Go online to [www.alsbom.org/ffst](http://www.alsbom.org/ffst).

You may also register or obtain other information by contacting Ministry Assistant Sheron Poole at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 298, or (334) 613-2298, [spoole@alsbom.org](mailto:spoole@alsbom.org).



**LEADERconnect**  
FORUM

**Tuesday, April 9, 2013**  
9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Baptist Building, 2001 E.  
South Blvd., Montgomery

**COST: \$20** (includes course materials and lunch) Pre-registration is requested to secure materials.

**LEADER FOR THE DAY: State Missionary Jim Swedenburg**

**TOPIC FOR THE DAY:**  
**Emotional Intelligence**  
“Emotional Intelligence” (EQ) refers to the personal-management and social skills that allow us to succeed in our interactions with other people. EQ addresses our responses to everyday challenges and social interactions as leaders. It involves intuition, character, integrity, motivation, communication and relationship skills. Self-understanding and healthy relationships are vital for effective leadership.

This seminar will focus on the two simple concepts that EQ draws upon: applying knowledge appropriately and applying feelings appropriately. During your day you will participate in lecture, dialogue and the use of an instrument to help you understand how you generally apply your own personal emotional intelligence.

*For registration and other information, please go online to [www.alsbom.org/leaderconnect](http://www.alsbom.org/leaderconnect) or contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, [jallen@alsbom.org](mailto:jallen@alsbom.org).*

# ALABAMA BAPTIST BOYS CAMPS 2013



**Southwest Alabama/Baldwin Baptist Camp, Foley:**

- May 27-31: 1st-6th grade Boys Camp. An association-sponsored camp. Contact (251) 945-5112 for information.



**Southeast Alabama/The Vineyard Christian Retreat, Ariton (near Ozark):**

- June 24-27: 4th-12th grade Boys Camp. Cost \$150.
- June 27-29: 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad or Mom Camp Cost \$160.



**Northeast Alabama/Marshall Retreat Center, Guntersville:**

- July 8-11: 4th-12th grade Boys Camp. Cost \$150.
- July 11-13: 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad Camp. Cost \$160/pair. Contact (256) 582-4994 for more information.



**Northwest Alabama/Earle Trent Baptist Assembly, Florence:**

- July 15-18: 3rd-7th grade Boys Camp. An association-sponsored camp. Contact (256) 383-7021 for information.
- July 18-20: 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad Camp. Cost: \$140/pair.



**Central Alabama/WorldSong Missions Camp, Cook Springs:**

- July 22-25: 4th-12th grade Boys Camp. Cost \$150
- July 25-27: 1st-6th grade Lad & Dad or Mom Camp. Cost \$160/pair.

The State Royal Ambassadors Camp staff includes a college-age counselor for every 5 to 7 boys. Church chaperones are not required at these camps, but they are welcome.

*For registration or other information, go online to [www.alsbom.org/ra](http://www.alsbom.org/ra) or please contact Ministry Assistant Hannah Finch at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, [hfinch@alsbom.org](mailto:hfinch@alsbom.org).*



RNS photo

**RELIGIOUS MINORITIES** — Ken Bowers (left), secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, testifies on Capitol Hill on March 15 and holds up a photo of a woman and her infant who were imprisoned together in an Iranian prison.

## 'A new low'

### Critics: State Department 'AWOL' on Iran's religious freedom

Religious freedom activists scolded the U.S. State Department for not appearing at a hearing March 15 on Iran's treatment of religious minorities, and called for greater government action to secure the release of people imprisoned there for their faith.

"The State Department is AWOL — they are absent without leave," complained Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a conservative law firm that represents the wife of Saeed Abedini, an Iranian-American minister in Tehran's Evin prison.

"They act as if they are embarrassed about Mr. Abedini's faith."

#### Call for release

In comparison, he said, members of the European Union have called at the United Nations for Abedini's release.

Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., a member of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which held the hearing on Capitol Hill, criticized the State Department for "such a deafening and almost cowardly silence" about the case.

Evan Owen, a press officer with the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said department officials who focus on

Iran had "scheduling conflicts" March 15, but Suzan Johnson Cook, ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, and other officials were scheduled to meet with Naghmeh Abedini, Saeed Abedini's wife, that afternoon.

"We believe we are doing everything we can publicly and privately," Owen said in an emailed response to a request for comment.

"We work closely with Congress on all efforts to support religious freedom around the world and would be happy to discuss our efforts with them in the future."

Naghmeh Abedini testified tearfully about having to explain to her children, who live with her in Idaho, why her husband is no longer calling them from Iran.

He was convicted in January of undermining Iran's national security by working with house churches from 2000 to 2005 and was sentenced to eight years in prison.

"Saeed is not a political person," she said in an interview after her testimony. "His passion is for Christ, for Jesus. So it's ridiculous that it's being related to national security."

More than 515,000 people have signed an online ACLJ petition urging U.S. and international leaders to press for Saeed Abedini's release.

Saeed Abedini's plight bears echoes of Youcef Nadarkhani, an Iranian pastor who faced the death

penalty after being accused of apostasy. He was released in 2012 after U.S. leaders, from House Speaker John Boehner to megachurch pastor Rick Warren, rallied for his release.

#### Government help

"We certainly didn't expect that it'd be harder to get help for Saeed Abedini, an American, from the American government than it would have for Youcef Nadarkhani, someone that they'll likely never have a chance to meet," said Jordan Sekulow, attorney for the Abedini family and executive director of ACLJ.

The hearing also addressed the mistreatment of other religious minorities in Iran, including Zoroastrians, Jews and Baha'is.

"In recent months, the Iranian government has managed to stoop to a new low by incarcerating young infants along with their Baha'i mothers," said Katrina Lantos Swett, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Ken Bowers, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, testified 436 Baha'is are awaiting trial, appeal or sentencing in Iran, up from 230 in January 2011.

In 2010, seven Baha'i leaders were sentenced to 20 years in prison. (RNS)

## Panel: Chinese regime still marked by brutality

Near-death torture and medical or food deprivation describe the experience of innocent prisoners under China's latest Communist officials, experts said at a recent Capitol Hill briefing.

A panel of Chinese, American and European leaders discussed the horrifying realities under the regime in a March 5 event sponsored by ChinaAid and Freedom House.

"The things that take place in China amount in my view to a modern genocide," said Edward McMillan-Scott.

McMillan-Scott, vice president of the European Parliament, described the Chinese government over the span of his lifetime as growing into the "most arbitrary, brutal and corrupt regime in the world."

Blind since childhood and now a prominent human rights activist, Chen Guangcheng explained the recent cyber-attacks launched by China on the press in the United States earlier this year. He also talked about life under the new Communist regime for his nephew and himself.

"In China they can openly go to your house to grab things, beat you, rob you of your abilities and your freedom," Chen said.

Chen is known as a "barefoot lawyer," or a self-taught activist, who advocates for victims of forced sterilization and abortions, as well as women and the poor in China. He is commonly known for his organization of a class-action lawsuit against the city of Linyi in the province of Shandong for violent enforcement of the one-child policy.

Placed under house arrest for about a year and formally arrested in June 2006, Chen was not allowed to have a lawyer. He was sentenced to four years and three months and was released in September 2010, then placed under house arrest and intense police scrutiny. Amnesty International deemed him a prisoner of conscience and issued appeals for his release.

#### Moral legitimacy

"It's incumbent upon the Chinese people to continuously fight for moral high ground and to bring moral legitimacy, not just to rely on what is written in books for law," Chen said.

He left China for New York City with his wife and two children in April 2012 following negotiations between the U.S. and China.

"I hope this Congress will take actions to help to break the Berlin Wall on the Internet, the cyber Berlin Wall in China. I hope this new Congress will give it some thought and take some tangible actions that can be seen by the world," Chen said.

Geng He, wife of human rights lawyer Gao Zisheng, shared some of her husband's experiences under

the regime. She, like Chen, hopes U.S. and European officials will place appropriate pressure on the authoritarian Chinese government. Last fall, China's Congress announced a new board of Communist Party leaders.

"Facing this situation, Gao doesn't have any fear [of] those in power, and he has tried to spread righteousness and justice and human rights by utilizing his knowledge and capabilities as a lawyer. With his familiarity with law and eloquence, he was able to win cases for many victims. As a result, he enjoyed a very positive reputation and even love in the hearts of the people," Geng said.

#### Emotional distress

Geng escaped from China with her two children. Her husband is still detained.

She described to the briefing audience how the police monitored her children and her. Geng also explained the emotional and mental distress that her daughter went through while being escorted to school in police vehicles.

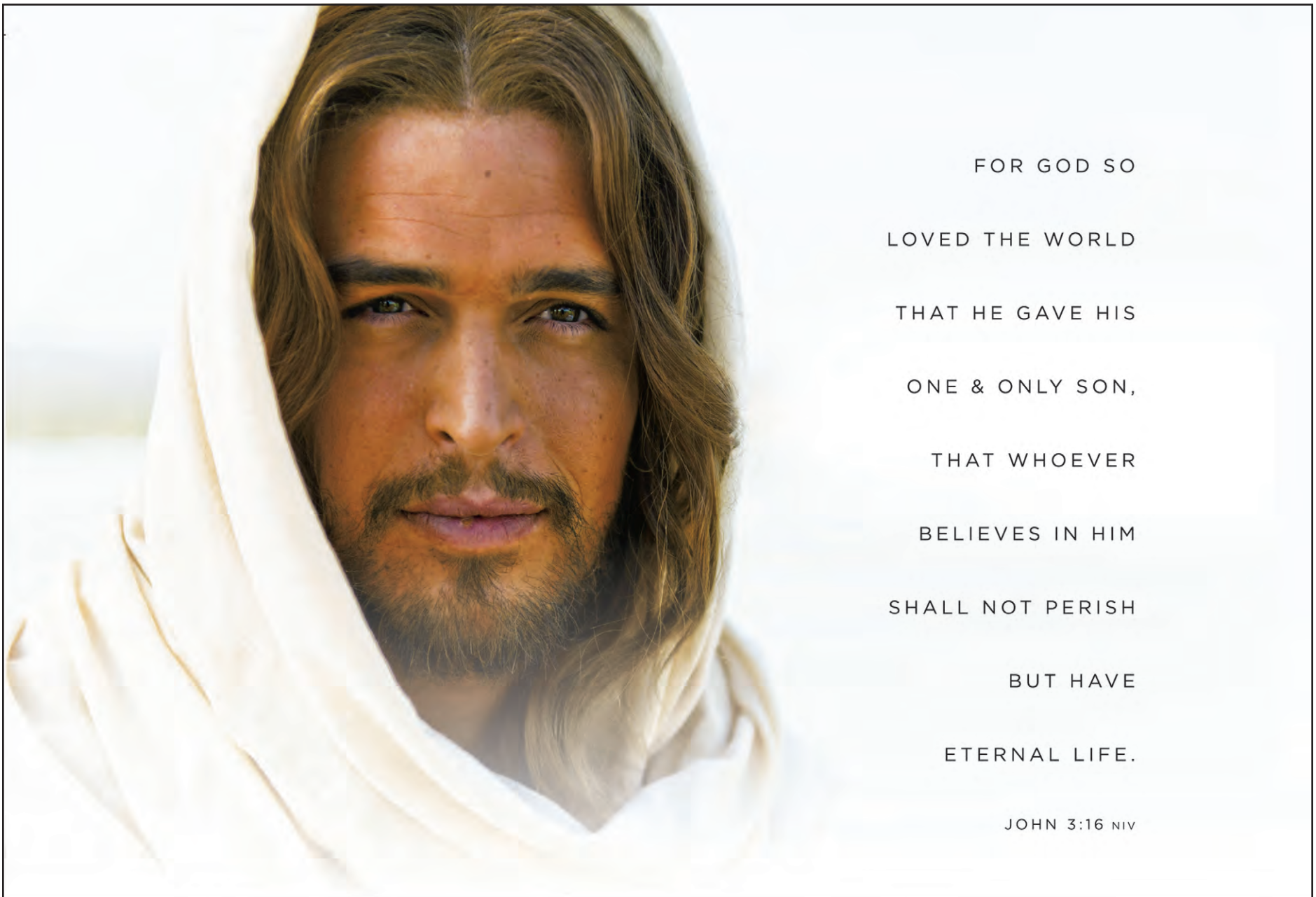
During her husband's detainment, the family was not adequately allowed visitation, she said. When the family asked where Gao went during his "disappearances," the guards would respond by saying, "We don't know. Why are you asking us?" Geng said. The family later learned Gao was being horribly tortured by the police during those times.

Geng is distressed, but, like Chen, she is hopeful the U.S. will not be silent at the injustice. She quoted the poignant words of Martin Luther King Jr., saying, "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

McMillan-Scott, a friend of Gao and his family, regards Gao as "a very genuine expert lawyer, as well as a Christian." He recounted the few times that Gao has been able to contact him by phone while detained. When Gao described his condition, McMillan-Scott quickly understood Gao, like Chen, is a prisoner of conscience.

"Now I have to say personally I have no religious beliefs, but I do believe it's clear that religious freedom is a fundamental part of any society. Even the Chinese Constitution provides that freedom, although of course it doesn't exist in China," McMillan-Scott said.

To illustrate the brutality of the regime, McMillan-Scott recalled a time when Gao told him of his near-death torture. He would awake from being attacked, and people would be standing around him in white coats. Scott explained that when Gao asked why the regime did not want him to die, they replied with a very grim statement: "We don't want you to die; we want you to want to die." (BP)



FOR GOD SO  
LOVED THE WORLD  
THAT HE GAVE HIS  
ONE & ONLY SON,  
THAT WHOEVER  
BELIEVES IN HIM  
SHALL NOT PERISH  
BUT HAVE  
ETERNAL LIFE.

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# Fed, states, UN face off on recreational marijuana laws

**M**arijuana advocates and opponents are awaiting a decision from U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, who said he would announce soon whether the Justice Department will enforce the federal ban on marijuana.

During a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing earlier in March, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D.-Vt., asked Holder if he was prepared to announce the federal government's response to new laws in Colorado and Washington legalizing marijuana for recreational use.

Both states, *The Seattle Times* reported, are proceeding with developing and implementing regulations but could face lawsuits from the federal government, which still classifies marijuana as a narcotic in the same category as heroin.

Holder said he had "good conversations" with elected officials in the two states, and he added, "We expect our ability to announce a policy relatively soon."

Alison Holcomb, who wrote Washington's new marijuana law, told *The Times* she was encouraged by the attorney general's brief answer because he made a point of commenting on his productive conversations with state leadership.

"That's important. If [the Department of Justice] intended to reject outright the citizens' efforts to reform our failed marijuana laws, there would be nothing to discuss," Holcomb said.

Observers, *The Times* said, believe Holder wants to learn more

details of what the state-regulated marijuana market would look like before he announces a policy.

President Obama in December 2012 told ABC News his administration would not prosecute marijuana users in Colorado and Washington. "We've got bigger fish to fry," Obama said. "It would not make sense for us to see a top priority as going after recreational users in states that have determined that it's legal."

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research at the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the administration needs to be careful with this decision.

"Marijuana is a dangerous drug that creates multiple problems for those who use it. Future lives and livelihoods are at stake in this debate," Duke said.

"President Obama's recent comment that he doesn't consider these state decisions to be a high-priority issue raises significant concerns for me

about this administration's commitment to enforce federal law on marijuana use."

Duke added, "I am hopeful that Attorney General Holder will recognize the responsibility of his office to enforce the laws of the land and put a stop to the wrongheaded marijuana policy decisions of these states."

Meanwhile the United States has received a rebuke from the United Nations' drug-monitoring body, which said the new laws in Colorado and Washington violate inter-

national drug treaties.

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), in its annual drug report released in March, called on the U.S. government to act "to ensure full compliance with the international drug control treaties on its entire territory."

"The entire international system is based on countries respecting the rules, and there's a broad fabric of international treaties that are part and parcel to that," David Johnson, the U.S. delegate to the Vienna-based board, told the Associated Press.

## 'Threat to well-being'

During a press conference in London, Raymond Yans, president of the INCB, denounced the recreational marijuana laws in Colorado and Washington as well as Massachusetts' recently becoming the 18th state to legalize marijuana for medical purposes.

The laws "undermine the humanitarian aims of the drug control system and are a threat to public health and well-being," Yans said, according to *The Guardian* March 5. He added that so-called "medicinal use" initiatives are little more than "a back-door to legalization for recreational use."

The INCB's report said that in

some U.S. states, medical marijuana laws "are being operated in a way that is completely inappropriate and outside of the conventions."

Yans said the INCB had been reassured by Holder that federal laws banning the cultivation and possession of marijuana would remain in force, *The Guardian* reported. U.N. drug authorities also are awaiting Holder's upcoming announcement regarding federal enforcement, the newspaper said.

Gil Kerlikowske, director of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy, appeared to support an enforcement of the federal ban in an interview with the Canadian news organization Maclean's, according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

The drug czar said a state-by-state patchwork of marijuana policies would "create real difficulties."

"We still have federal law that

places marijuana as being illegal," Kerlikowske said. "The administration has not done a particularly good job of, one, talking about marijuana as a public health issue, and number two, talking about what can be done and where we should be headed on our drug policy."

Though Obama shifted his stance on same-sex "marriage" while in office, Kerlikowske does not think the administration should evaluate marijuana policy the same way.

"I don't look at marijuana as a human right, or a civil right, or even in the same venue as gay 'marriage,'" Kerlikowske said.

"This is a public health issue. There are significant health concerns around marijuana from all the science, not ideology. I don't see the legalization of drugs and making them widely available as a good thing, and I don't think locking everyone up is a good thing either." (BP)

**"There are significant health concerns around marijuana from all the science, not ideology."**

**Gil Kerlikowske  
U.S. Office of National  
Drug Control Policy**

**"Marijuana is a dangerous drug ... future lives and livelihoods are at stake."**

**Barrett Duke  
Southern Baptist Ethics  
& Religious Liberty  
Commission**

# Etowah County Commission approves moratorium on electronic bingo

**T**here will be no movement in Etowah County on electronic-bingo related issues — at least for the time being. The Etowah County Commission's indefinite moratorium on electronic bingo-related actions in the county was approved March 19.

Commission Chairman Joey Statum said the moratorium will prevent electronic bingo proposals to be presented to the commission as well as prevent the commission from considering or talking about those proposals until the question of electronic bingo's legality in the state is settled, ac-

ording to a WEAC TV 24 news report.

This moratorium also will keep commissioners from extending an agreement with a bingo developer and will keep other developers from applying for a permit, according to a news report in *The Gadsden Times*.

"It will save the county a lot of money to wait on a court of competent jurisdiction or the Legislature to do something to determine whether electronic bingo is legal or not," Sheriff Todd Entekin said in *The Gadsden Times* report.

Also March 19, Macon County

Circuit Judge Tom Young decided that he would not step down from the VictoryLand casino forfeiture case.

The ruling came after a motion from Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange's office that requested Young recuse himself from the case. Strange's office said Young has shown prejudice against the case due to his initial refusal to sign a search warrant for the recent raid at VictoryLand, according to an al.com news report.

During the raid Feb. 19, more than 1,000 electronic gambling machines and more than \$200,000 in cash were seized from VictoryLand. Following its order directing Young to issue the warrant that allowed the raid, the Supreme Court of Alabama issued a 46-page opinion March 1 explaining the reasons Young was wrong to deny the State's application for the search warrant.

A date has not been set for the forfeiture case. Strange's office is considering whether it will appeal Young's decision to preside over the case, according to a statement by Alabama Deputy Attorney General Sonny Reagan. "Regardless, the attorney general's office intends to aggressively pursue a speedy trial in order to get a final ruling regarding electronic bingo in Macon County," Reagan said.

(TAB)

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# Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



## 50 Years Ago March 1963

World Missions Conferences: "Sharing Christ with the Whole World" is the theme for two world missions conferences scheduled for Mobile and Birmingham. Host churches for the meetings are First Baptist Church, Mobile, Howard M. Reaves, pastor; and Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, Lamar Jackson, pastor. Identical programs have been planned: representing the Foreign Mission Board, Baker J. Cauthen, board secretary; and representing the Home Mission Board, L.W. Martin, secretary of the department of missionary education and Gerald Palmer, associate in the department of language groups.

## 40 Years Ago March 1973

Missionary Slain in Taiwan:

Gladys Hopewell, Southern Baptist missionary to Taiwan for 19 years, was found slain in her apartment on Sunday, March 11. She apparently died of strangulation. Hopewell is the fourth Southern Baptist missionary to die by violence in the past 20 months. Prior to missionary appointment, she was educational director for First Baptist Church, Talladega, and South Avondale Baptist Church, Birmingham. Hopewell's survivors include her mother, Bernice Hopewell, and a brother, Joseph C. Hopewell, both of Talladega.

## 30 Years Ago March 1983

Missions Volunteers: Five Southern Baptists with Alabama ties recently attended orientation in Atlanta, for new Mission Service Corps volunteers. They

are Bill Seay of Pleasant Grove; Iva and Ray Heflin of Huntsville; Sanan and David Brazzeal of Birmingham and Atlanta. Seay will serve in Randolph and Clay counties as the Christian Service Center coordinator. The Heflins will move to Dolan Springs, Ariz., where Ray Heflin will work as a church planter. The Brazzeals will serve Puget Sound Baptist Association in Seattle, Wash., in the areas of music, youth and education.

## 20 Years Ago March 1993

Leader in Missions Giving: Hebron Baptist Church, located in a rural area near Columbia, has consistently been among the leaders within the Alabama Baptist State Convention in per capita giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions. With a

total of 58 resident members, the church gave \$8,687 to the offering in 1992. The church's total yearly budget is \$28,940. Pastor Ted Forrester and his wife, Betty Sue, are former home missionaries to Puerto Rico.

## 10 Years Ago March 2003

State's Only Lay DOM Retiring: William "Pete" Phillips, Alabama's only lay director of missions, has set his retirement from his leadership post for the Carey/Clay Baptist Association for April 1. He has served the association for 13 years.

"I'm not retiring from God's work, I'm just changing directions," Phillips said.

He plans to continue teaching in associational churches as needed and working with the Clay County jail ministry.

## MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR EMAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

### 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.

**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.

**FULL-TIME MUSIC/YOUTH MINISTER:** Ebenezer Baptist Church, Cordele, Ga., is seeking full-time minister of music and youth. We are a growing church, average attendance 100, seeking a devoted follower of Jesus Christ and effective Christian leader. Three years experience preferred. Email resumés and references to: sandrafmckinney@gmail.com by May 1. Call 229-273-8307 for details.

**BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Rainsville First Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational minister of music whose responsibilities would include leading choir and worship. RFBC enjoys blended worship, leaning toward praise and worship. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 585, Rainsville, AL 35986 or firstbaptist@farmerstel.com. Call 256-638-3141.

**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.

**CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER:** First Baptist Church, Pinson, is seeking a part-time contemporary worship leader. Please send your resumés

to: sandysuttles@fbcpinson.org or c/o Sandy Suttles, P.O. Box 310, Pinson, AL 35126.

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

**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.

**MINISTER TO PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN (BIRTH-5TH GRADE):** Ridgecrest Baptist, Tuscaloosa, is prayerfully seeking a God-called person for this 30 hour per week position. Send resumés to: 912 31st St. East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405, or email to: rbcscoth@comcast.net.

**MINISTER TO KIDS:** First Baptist Church, Dothan, Ala., is accepting resumés for a full-time minister to kids (grades 1-6). Mail resumés to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Mike Golson, 300 W. Main Street, Dothan, AL 36301, or email: Mike@fbcdothan.org.

### OTHER POSITIONS

**PART-TIME FINANCIAL SECRETARY:** McElwain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., is searching for a part-time (24 hours a week) financial secretary who is trained in ACS (Automated Church Systems) for financials. If interested, email jlbaker@mcElwain.org to request an application.

**ADMINISTRATOR/HEAD OF SCHOOL:** Immanuel Christian School, Steens, Miss., is taking applications for the position administrator/head of school. Christian education's calling and administrator certifications necessary. Contact Gene Coleman. Email: genecoleman52@yahoo.com. www.immanuelsschool.net.

**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.

### BUSINESS

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## Want to know God?

By Pastor Kevin Blackwell  
Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown

On July 19, 2010, my life changed forever. Sitting in a hotel lobby in Jinan, China, my wife and I waited with nervous anticipation. We sat there for what seemed like hours until finally a car pulled up, the door opened and into the lobby came the cutest little 6-year-old boy you have ever seen. His clothes were dirty and his shoes were too small, but he had on the best outfit he could find for this special day. Though I had never seen him before, I instantly loved him. For the first time in his life Guo Fu Feng would have someone to call "Daddy."

His life had not been an easy one. He was abandoned by his parents when only 10 months old, left with only the clothes on his back. Fung Fung, as he was called, was taken to an orphanage where he would live until the day he came to our hotel. For more than a year, Lorie and I had only pictures, stories, medical reports and dreams of how things would be on this "gotcha" day. The moment that we took him in our arms, his days of being an orphan were over.

Today Fung Fung is now Brodie Blackwell. In one day he got a new name, a new family, new clothes, his own room and a future.

We all have so much in common with my son. We are spiritual orphans separated from our Father. We need to be adopted in order for our future to be secured and our life to have purpose.

Paul says, "God sent Him (Jesus) to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children. And because you Gentiles have become His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. And since you are His child, everything He has belongs to you" (Gal. 4:5-6; 7b).

Has there ever been a time in your life when you, like my son, stepped into a new family, were embraced by your Father and found your eternal home?

You can do that today by trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You will find the life you have been longing for and the Father who loved you enough to pay the ultimate sacrifice to bring you home.

# About Alabama

## Deciding What to Do About Failing Schools

By Jim Williams  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The hottest issue in the current legislative session is what to do about failing public schools. This is a critical matter for our state. Eighty-seven percent of Alabama students attend public schools. State and local taxpayers spend \$6 billion a year to operate them and have \$10 billion invested in school facilities. It is important not only for the students but also for the state's economic development that these investments pay off.

Alabama has many high-performing schools, but there are some in which large numbers of students don't meet expectations on statewide tests. The question is: what's the best remedy?

### Controversial law

One approach is to allow students to leave schools that persistently fail to produce good results. The Legislature has passed and the governor has signed a controversial law to allow tax credits for parents who transfer a student from a failing public school into another public school or a private school. Legal challenges remain, and it is not clear whether the law will be implemented.

Another approach, already a part of Alabama law, is to fix the failing schools. A 1995 law defines a "school in need of assistance" as one in which a majority of students do not make a passing score on statewide tests. The law creates a remedial process beginning with as-

sistance but leading ultimately to consequences for the school staff if improvement does not occur.

First, the school's faculty develops an improvement plan with parental input. If results do not improve, a state team is appointed to make recommendations. If this too fails, "the State Superintendent of Education is required to intervene and to appoint a person or persons to run the day-to-day operation of the school."

The state used this intervention law for a few years but then began to follow federal "No Child Left Behind" rules. A number of schools have been allowed to languish on low-performing lists.

The State Department of Education is developing a new system for evaluating schools. Working with 44 other states, it has created tougher student learning standards and will use new tests to evaluate student performance in terms of career and college readiness. These are necessary developments.

However, it is not enough simply to raise expectations for student performance. The state should begin once more to follow existing law for assisting and fixing failing schools, improving the process where necessary to get results.

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



# 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.

### BALDWIN

▶ Randy S. Johnson Sr. will present "Portrait of a Rock" on March 29, 7 p.m. **Friendship Church, Bon Secour**, will host the presentation. "Portrait of a Rock" is the dramatization of the life of Peter. The church also will host an Easter sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. at Visitation Pond at the rear of the church property. A continental breakfast will follow. Johnson is pastor.

### BETHEL

▶ **Nanafalia Church** will celebrate homecoming April 14, 10 a.m. with Shannon Knight as speaker, entertainer and singer. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. There also will be an afternoon singing with Knight at 1 p.m. Hal Taylor is pastor. ▶ **Pine Hill Church** will hold "Spring Revival Week," beginning with a singing April 6, 7 p.m. featuring the Prom-

ise Trio of Nashville. Allen Atkins will speak April 7-10. Sunday services will be at 11 a.m. and 6:15 p.m. and weeknight services will be at 7 p.m. Chris Kynard is pastor.

### COFFEE

▶ **Damascus Church, Elba**, will hold a sunrise Easter service March 31, 6:30 a.m. Breakfast will be at 7 a.m., Sunday School at 8 a.m. and worship at 9 a.m. Everyone is welcome. For information call 334-894-6728. Mack King is supply preacher.

### ELMORE

▶ **Calvary Church, Wetumpka**, ordained Craig Davis as deacon March 17. Anthony Rhodes is pastor.

### SHELBY

▶ **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will hold an Easter sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. Breakfast will follow in the fellowship hall and there will be no Sunday School. Morning worship will be at 10:30 a.m. Ken Phillips is pastor.

### SULPHUR SPRINGS

▶ **Bethel Church, Dora**, will hold spring revival April 7-10. Sunday services will be at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7 p.m. Morning Bible study will be April 8-10, 11:45 a.m. Reuben "Lucky" Teague, director of missions for Walker Association, will be the guest evangelist. For information visit [www.bbcdora.com](http://www.bbcdora.com) or call 205-648-2917. John Foles is pastor.

### TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Alberta Church, Tuscaloosa**, and **Open Door Church, Tuscaloosa**, will present "Arise, My Love" March 30-31, 6:30 p.m. each night. Prior to the presentation there will be a Children's Interactive Pageant at 6 p.m. Alberta Church and Open Door Church will have a combined Resurrection Day worship service March 31, 10 a.m. Each of these services will be at Open Door Church and everyone is invited. Keith Pugh is pastor of Open Door Church.

## — Correction —

In the March 14 article "The Pursuit encourages students to think 'outside box,'" the speaker in the photo was incorrectly identified as Jeff Iorg. The correct name is Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Also in the article "Southern Baptists 'must continue to work toward reaching all members of our local communities,'" the International Ministry Center in Mobile was incorrectly identified as a ministry of Baldwin Baptist Association. It is a ministry of Mobile Baptist Association.

## LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

It does not blow a hole in the concept of religious liberty by allowing a few responsible parents a choice to use their tax dollars to go to another nonfailing public school, or a private school if they wish. In many places, a private school may be the only alternative for miles. Without that choice, your position would leave those students detained in some of the worst schools our teachers

and principals have to work in.

It is also time we realize that strong churches, strong families and strong communities will make stronger schools. We need revival in our homes, state and nation to fix the ills that plague us.

Don Wallace  
Northport, Ala.



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Photo courtesy of Chilton Baptist Association

### ALABAMA BAPTIST MISSION BELLES PAINT AT SHOCCO SPRINGS

The Alabama Baptist Mission Belles met at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, Feb. 7-8, during the DOM/Wives Retreat. The Belles spent the afternoon painting with artist Anita Bice (far right). Vicki Stoner (second from right) is the Belles' president.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 31

## Explore the Bible By Dale Younce Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

### BELIEVE IN THE RISEN LORD Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

For many adults, "Easter" means no more than "spring holiday." Christians by definition express some belief in the resurrection. They may not have thought through the evidence for the resurrection. Their faith may be secondhand or based on subjective experience. All these adults, like the women at the tomb and the disciples, can consider the evidence presented by the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances as good reasons to believe in Jesus' resurrection.

#### Consider the Empty Tomb (1-4)

The women who had lingered at the cross came to Jesus' tomb early, as day was dawning, on Sunday, the first day of the week. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Less. They were bringing spices to anoint Jesus' body (Luke 24:1). They expected to find Jesus dead just as they had left His body on the previous Friday evening at sunset. Suddenly several astonishing events happened. As an earthquake occurred, an angel appeared and supernaturally rolled back the heavy stone that was blocking the entrance to the tomb. He did this not to let Jesus out but to let in the women and later the apostles (v. 6). Then the angel sat on the stone.

The sudden appearance of the angel, at the same time the women arrived, is the first clue that something extraordinary was happening. The empty tomb points to Jesus' bodily resurrection.

#### Recall What Jesus Predicted (5-7)

The angel reassured the women that they had nothing to fear. In fact, the angel knew exactly why the women had come to the tomb — they were looking for the body of the crucified and dead Jesus. These women, as well as the disciples, did not expect Jesus to be alive.

The angel then spoke the words that compose the foundation of Christianity: "He is not here! For He has been resur-

rected just as He said." The resurrection of Jesus is the great truth that lies at base of Christianity. The words "just as He said" look back to Jesus' predictions of His death (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). The implication is that if He did not rise on the third day, then He was not truly a prophet of God, much less the Son of God. The angel then invited the women into the tomb to see that it was empty.

After the angel had presented the evidence that Jesus was alive, he gave them some instructions for the disciples. The women were to go quickly and tell the disciples with these specific words, "He has been raised from the dead," and He will precede them into Galilee and meet them there. Jesus' resurrection fulfilled His own predictions that He would be raised.

#### Reflect on the Risen Lord's Appearances (8-10)

Having been given a good news task, the women hurried away to tell the disciples what had happened. Suddenly Jesus met them with a greeting. When they heard His voice, they recognized Him immediately, fell at His feet and worshipped Him. Jesus repeated the instructions for the disciples to meet Him in Galilee. Matthew recorded Jesus' supreme post-resurrection appearance in Galilee, where Jesus was seen by more than 500 believers at once (1 Cor. 15:4-6). The Galilean ministry of Jesus is prominent in Matthew's Gospel and it would be natural for Jesus to meet His disciples there. All 11 disciples were from Galilee and would be returning to Galilee after the Passover Feast. Jesus' appearances and messages to the women can be explained only by His resurrection.

#### Think About the Church's Growth (16-20)

The closing section of this week's lesson features the Great Commission, God's marching orders.

The church's continued numeral and spiritual growth is further evidence of Jesus' resurrection and lordship.

## Bible Studies for Life By Scott McGinnis Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

### SEEING OR RECOGNIZING? John 20:1-18

The earliest preaching of the Christian church proclaimed the resurrection of Christ. Indeed, the apostle Paul spends very little time in his letters discussing the life and works of Jesus, instead focusing upon the significance of Christ's death and resurrection for those who follow Him. Likewise, the "beloved disciple" who authored the Gospel of John understands Jesus' death and resurrection as His glorification, a "lifting up" that will draw all people to Him (John 12:32).

Although all the Gospels recount the story of the empty tomb, they do so with different details and contexts in keeping with their individual themes. In John, Jesus' appearance to Mary and ultimately to all the disciples continues the Gospel's emphasis on the difference between merely witnessing events and understanding their true meaning and spiritual significance.

#### What Do You See? (1-4)

The Jewish calendar began the day at sunset, so Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb would have occurred according to modern calendars sometime late Saturday evening or early Sunday morning. Her initial appraisal — "they have taken the Lord" — introduces in this passage the theme of misunderstanding that pervades the Gospel. Earlier Jesus has accused His critics of not knowing where He came from or where He is going, but even His disciples often suffer from the same condition. On the evening of their last meal together, Jesus had told His disciples that He was going away but not to worry since "you know the way to the place I am going." Thomas replies with some anxiety, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5).

#### What Will Convince You? (5-10)

Lack of understanding is again on display as Peter and the beloved disciple both witness the empty tomb as well as the burial cloths. Peter's reaction is not recorded, but the beloved disciple "saw and believed." Believed what, exactly? In verse nine the narra-

tor offers the commentary that the disciples still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus "had to rise from the dead." Is the reader meant to infer that the beloved disciple believed Mary's report of a stolen body?

Possibly, yet elsewhere John's Gospel regularly emphasizes belief and understanding as a process.

By carefully marking out the progression from grief to bewilderment to misunderstanding to full apprehension of the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection, the Gospel invites the reader to follow the same path. When I as a reader have trouble grasping the gospel story, I take comfort in the fact that even the disciples struggled at first. Later Jesus will declare, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (20:29).

#### How Will You Respond to Jesus? (11-18)

After the interlude with Peter and the beloved disciple, the story returns to Mary, who remains weeping at the tomb after the others leave. The dramatic tension heightens as first the angels and then Jesus Himself asks why she is crying. Notably, her moment of enlightenment comes when Jesus calls her name, and the reader is reminded of the image of the Good Shepherd who knows His own sheep and they know Him (John 10:14).

A beautiful painting by Rembrandt, "The Risen Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene," captures the moment of Mary's recognition. Light falls on Mary's face as she turns and looks back over her shoulder. Her expression is a mixture of bewilderment, relief and dawning joy. The artist depicts the scene so as to pull viewers into the dramatic moment and so consider their own encounters with the risen Christ.

In like manner the writer of the Gospel tells the story of Jesus' resurrection in such a way as to invite readers to experience the same truth for themselves. Mary Magdalene emerges from the garden as the first evangelist saying: "I have seen the Lord."

## Christian Crossword

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- Across**
1. What the children of Israel ate for 40 years. (Ex. 16:35)
  6. There hath \_\_\_\_\_ temptation taken you. (1 Cor. 10:13)
  8. The firstborn of Isaac's twin sons. (Gen. 25:25)
  11. Joel and Jehu's great-grandfather. (1 Chron. 4:35)
  12. Shuah's second son. (Gen. 38:24)
  14. Southern state. (abbr.)
  15. \_\_\_\_\_ and see that the Lord is good. (Ps. 34:8)
  16. We were comforted over you in \_\_\_\_\_ our affliction. (1 Thess. 3:7)
  17. The voice of \_\_\_\_\_ crying in the wilderness. (Matt. 1:3)
  18. \_\_\_\_\_ for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Josh. 24:15)
  19. \_\_\_\_\_ kingdom come. (Matt. 6:10)
  20. Herod slew the children ... \_\_\_\_\_ years old and under. (Matt. 2:16)
  21. Even as a \_\_\_\_\_ gathereth her chickens under her wings. (Matt. 23:37)
  23. The fourth tone of the diatonic scale.
  24. A prophetess, the daughter of Paniel. (Luke 2:36)
  26. A suffix forming the comparative degree.
  27. God \_\_\_\_\_ forth his Son. (Gal. 4:4)

29. Mister. (abbr.)
30. Moses \_\_\_\_\_ all the words of the Lord. (Ex. 24:4)
32. King of the Amalekites. (1 Sam. 15:8)
34. Street. (abbr.)
35. One of the children of Shobal. (Gen. 36:23)
36. The well, Beer-lahai-roi, is between \_\_\_\_\_ and Bered. (Gen. 16:14)
38. And Zebadiah, and Arad, and \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Chron. 8:15)
39. I will punish \_\_\_\_\_ in Babylon. (Jer. 51:44)
40. At \_\_\_\_\_ time. (Matt. 12:1)
42. \_\_\_\_\_ though I walk through the valley. (Ps. 23:4)
44. Stingeth like \_\_\_\_\_ adder. (Prov. 23:32)
46. Nickname for Isaac.
47. \_\_\_\_\_, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)
49. Abihail was Mordecai's \_\_\_\_\_. (Esther 2:15)
51. To blend together.
52. These things I will that thou \_\_\_\_\_ constantly. (Titus 3:8)
54. From everlasting, and to everlasting, \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 41:13)
55. \_\_\_\_\_ ye then be risen with Christ. (Col. 3:1)
56. Ye call me \_\_\_\_\_ and Lord. (John 13:13)
57. Abraham ... died in a good old \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 25:8)

- Down**
1. The apostle who was a tax collector. (Matt. 10:3)
  2. Abijam's son. (1 Kings 15:8)
  3. The first month. (Esther 3:7)
  4. The fishermen ... were washing their \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 5:2)
  5. A fermented drink.
  6. \_\_\_\_\_ found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Gen. 6:8)
  7. The \_\_\_\_\_ wise God, be honour. (1 Tim. 1:17)
  8. There is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at \_\_\_\_\_-dor. (1 Sam. 28:7)
  9. David's firstborn. (2 Sam. 3:2)
  10. \_\_\_\_\_ hospitality one to another. (1 Pet. 4:9)
  13. Nickname for Albert.
  17. He came unto his \_\_\_\_\_. (John 1:11)
  19. A yellowish-brown color.
  20. Six hundred shekels of gold went to one \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Kings 10:16)
  22. They have \_\_\_\_\_ from the faith. (1 Tim. 6:10)
  23. Suffer me that I may \_\_\_\_\_ the pillars. (Judg. 16:26)
  25. The \_\_\_\_\_ of violence is in their hands. (Isa. 59:6)
  27. They look and \_\_\_\_\_ upon me. (Ps. 22:17)
  28. \_\_\_\_\_ up thy bed, and walk. (Matt. 9:6)
  29. Thou are \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 12:15)
  31. Children \_\_\_\_\_ your parents in the Lord. (Eph. 6:1)

33. Abda's grandfather. (Neh. 11:17)
34. There shall be as the _____ of an olive tree. (Isa. 24:13)
37. One of David's sons. (1 Chron. 3:5)
38. Shaphat's father. (1 Chron. 27:29)
41. Short for Texas.
43. A particular quality surrounding a person or thing.
45. He drew _____ to behold it. (Acts 7:31)
48. Put _____ the old man with his deeds. (Col. 3:9)
50. Names. (abbr.)
53. I am. (contraction)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Nigerian Christians flee, hide in rock formations

ADUWAN, Nigeria — Christian children fled from gunmen and hid among rock formations towering over the eastern side of Aduwan, but a 6-month-old baby and a 13-year-old girl did not survive.

The infant, Alexander Blessed, and the girl, Happiness Adamu, were the youngest of five people from five churches who were slain. Christians were still gathered in and about a home Feb. 23 where a funeral for the village chief had taken place in the predominantly Muslim Nigerian state of Kaduna when gunmen arrived at night and began firing.

Eleven Christians were hospitalized with wounds, including Martha Blessed, who was shot as she tried to protect her infant son. Bullets broke both legs of another 13-year-old Christian girl, Gloria Livinus, of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Aduwan.

The raid came as a shock as area Christians had been living without enmity toward anyone, said John Audi, 45-year-old grandson of the village chief and a member of St. Patrick's.

Witnesses reportedly said the gunmen spoke in Fulani dialect, but church leaders said the area had been free of the land and property conflicts that have marked relations between Muslim, ethnic Fulanis and predominantly Christian tribes.

The attack came two days after a similar slaughter of 10 people in village near Jos in Plateau state.

Vicar Casmir Yabo, of the First African Church Mission, Aduwan, said the rock formations protecting the village's eastern flank saved many lives.

### Christians across India wounded, jailed, expelled

CHIRAYINKEEZZH, India — Christians suffered serious head injuries, expulsion from home and incarceration based on false witness as Hindu extremists continued their reign of terror in India in March, sources said.

In the southern state of Kerala, some 100 Hindu extremists March 10 attacked a Brethren Assembly church service in Chirayinkeezh village, Trivandrum District, beating the Christians with wooden clubs; one church member sustained a serious head injury, Pastor M. Anil Kumar said.

Area Brethren Assembly leader K.V. Varghese said police arrested three of the assailants after Christians filed a complaint. Hindu extremists protested the arrests by calling for an all-day strike March 12.

In Madhya Pradesh in central India, two Christian leaders were arrested after Hindu extremists beat them and falsely accused them of forceful conversion.

State police arrested Pastor Isaac Rajamani and evangelist Raju Shikaria on Feb. 18 after Hindu extremists beat them Feb. 16 in a village near Khandwa, said Friends Missionary Prayer Band leader Jaisingh Sugumaran. The extremists mounted the attack at the Gulai village home of a sick couple who had invited Rajamani and Shikaria to pray for them.

Christodan Takri, a church leader in Amar Jyoti, told Morning Star News the Hindu extremists March 1 beat the family of Rabinarayana Marandi, took their mobile phone and drove them from the village.

### New code could bring more religious freedom penalties

ASTANA, Kazakhstan — If adopted in its current form, Kazakhstan's proposed new Criminal Code would allow those who lead unregistered religious communities to be imprisoned for up to three months, and those who share their faith for up to four months.

The draft text — seen by Forum 18 News Service — is expected to be approved by the government in May and presented to parliament in July, Ruslan Toktagulov of the General Prosecutor's Office, who is coordinating preparation of the draft, told Forum 18 from Astana.

A new Code of Administrative Offences is expected to reach parliament in the fall, but no draft has been published. Fifteen individuals are known to Forum 18 to have been found guilty under the Code of Administrative Offences in 2013 for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. Ten were fined two months' average wages, four were fined one month's average wages and the other was warned.

# 'Send North America'

## NAMB posts online church planting maps

**S**outhern Baptists may access new online church planting maps for North America's largest, most influential and least-churched cities.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has posted digital maps highlighting current and planned church plants for 17 of the 30 cities targeted in its Send North America outreach. The maps are available at [namb.net/cities](http://namb.net/cities). Maps for the remaining cities will be posted as they are completed.

The online maps stem from NAMB President Kevin Ezell's longstanding desire to show Southern Baptists specific "dots on a map" where new churches are needed in Send North America cities.

"If a church wants to get involved in a specific city, you don't have to wonder where the needs are," Ezell said. "This is a very tangible way to see the needs and also the huge impact adding these churches will have on these cities."

The online maps show the locations of current church plants with red dots and the locations of future plants with blue dots. The future church locations have been identified by local strategy teams as needing church plants but lacking church planters. When a user clicks on a current or future church plant, they'll find its address and primary ethnicity.

Users can zoom out to get a big-picture view of the city's church planting needs or zoom in to take a look at the actual neighborhoods near current and future church plants. Also, by using Google Street View technology available on the maps, users can

access street-level views of the area and conduct virtual prayerwalks through the neighborhood.

Shane Critser, NAMB's team leader for church mobilization, said churches can use the maps for advance looks at areas they want to target. He also hopes churches will use the maps to guide them as they pray for the cities. For prospective church planters, the street-level views can allow them to assess possibilities in a variety of cities without ever leaving their homes.

"It's like a virtual vision trip," Critser said. "You're not going to taste and feel it like if you were really there, but you get the visual and can see just how big the need is in the community."

Critser said local strategy teams of pastors, church planters and associational and state Southern Baptist leaders developed each of the maps by determining where and what kind of churches needed to be planted in their cities to penetrate lostness.

"We didn't ask the local strategy teams to tell us how many churches they could plant,"

Critser said. "We asked them, 'How many churches should we plant?' Those are two different questions. The first focuses on resources and asks them to come up with a plan based on that. We wanted them to look at the lostness and how many churches they had and decide how many churches they needed to penetrate the city's lostness."

Churches wishing to become involved in a specific Send North America city can send an email using that city's name, followed by [@namb.net](mailto:@namb.net) (i.e. [cincinnati@namb.net](mailto:cincinnati@namb.net)) or visit [namb.net](http://namb.net), click "Mobilize Me" and indicate interest in a specific city. (BP)

**"If a church wants to get involved in a specific city, you don't have to wonder where the needs are."**

**Kevin Ezell  
North American Mission Board**

## Iranian-American pastor receives medical treatment, given extended family visit

**S**aeed Abedini, the Iranian-American pastor who has been imprisoned in Tehran for his Christian faith, has been examined for internal bleeding and was granted an extended visit with his family for the first time, according to the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ).

"Our sources in Iran have confirmed that Pastor Saeed's family in Iran was able to visit with him today in Evin Prison for an extended two-hour visitation," Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ's executive director, wrote March 18.

ACLJ's report said Abedini told his relatives that prison officials assured him he would be taken to a private hospital outside the prison to receive medical attention.

Medical treatment for the persecuted pastor, Sekulow said, would

be "the first modest step toward acknowledging the grave human rights abuses Iran has perpetrated against this U.S. citizen." He added, though, that Iranian officials have failed to keep promises in the past.

### 'International pressure'

In one more bit of positive news, ACLJ said the Iranian Mission to the United Nations has asked Iran's top appeals court officials to consider Abedini's case.

"International pressure is working," Sekulow wrote. "Now is the time to step up the pressure. We know Iran is listening."

Testifying March 15 on Capitol Hill (see story, page 17), Naghmeh Abedini, Saeed Abedini's wife, said, "I must say I am disappointed with our government. I am disappointed that our president and our

State Department have not fully engaged in this case. ... I expect more from our government.

"We should know as American citizens that our government will stand up to protect our beliefs, our fundamental human rights," she said.

After no representative from the State Department attended the Capitol Hill hearing, Rep. Frank Wolf, R.-Va., chairman of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, left the hearing record open to allow the State Department a week to file written testimony.

Wolf and five other congressmen subsequently sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry, asking him to make the case a priority and to swiftly issue a public statement calling for the pastor's immediate and unconditional release. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Provident Label Group

Casting Crowns will perform at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, March 30.

# 'Discipleship in songs'

## Student ministry remains priority for award-winning band

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As the lead singer for Casting Crowns and student pastor at Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church, McDonough, Ga., Mark Hall sees his life as a constant balancing act. But reaching as many people as possible for Jesus Christ provides the driving force for all he does.

"We have a purpose and calling, and that's to be a light. That begins by reaching out to the person next to you, whether it's at school or at work, and sharing Christ's love with them," Hall said. "Once you have a walk with the Lord, you begin to see the world the way Jesus does. You begin to see the hurt in people's lives, and you feel compelled to act on that."

For Hall, telling teenagers about the hope and assurance found in a relationship with Christ is top priority. Hall has served Eagle's Landing First Baptist since 2001.

Each of the Casting Crowns band members serves a church in the Atlanta area. But students at those churches are unfazed by their leaders' awards and achievements, including being the five-time Dove Award-winning Group of the Year and winning Grammy and American Music Awards.

What impresses students and parents is seeing firsthand the band members' commitment and passion to reach students for Christ.

"Our music is discipleship set in songs," Hall said. "The apostle Paul said the same thing to every church he went to: 'You need to walk with Jesus. You need to love people.' That's what our message is."

"All of our songs come from being in student ministry. The songs come from what we're teaching and what we're experiencing in our ministry with students. I love having the songs connect with people. Our commitment to youth ministry and the local church keeps us in tune with the heartbeat of God and what He's doing in churches today. It's our priority, and we schedule our tours around those responsibilities."

On and off stage, band members focus on sharing

three important messages with students, Hall said.

"We want to see people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We share the gospel at all our concerts," he said.

"The next goal is that we want to see believers have their own walk with Jesus and not rely on having their youth pastor or pastor around so they can feel close to God. They have to establish their own relationship with Jesus."

"The third goal is that we want to see people discover their spiritual gifts, their talents and ministry. We want them to take action — start serving, helping and start seeing Jesus change people's lives."

In addition to reaching students, Hall tries to help parents understand the challenges students face — especially the need for parents' involvement and monitoring time spent online.

"Technology is a great tool that they can use, but it's also hurtful at the same time. Ultimately it all comes back to mom and dad," he said. "I think parents are still the most important influence in their kids' lives."

### Performing in Mobile

This spring, Casting Crowns is on tour promoting their latest project, "The Acoustic Sessions." They will perform at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, March 30.

In addition, Hall has a full schedule of events planned for the student ministry at Eagle's Landing. Hall and his wife, Melanie, also juggle a busy schedule raising four children, including an adopted daughter from China.

"A lot of the things that God's teaching me now, He's been trying to teach me for a long time. The area in my life that I'm struggling with the most and where I'm learning the most — not because I'm sharp, but because I'm learning the hard way — is that God is in control," Hall said.

"God reminds me daily that if He wanted someone else, He would have called someone else. That lifts a weight off my shoulders, because I know that if He's called me, then He's also equipped me to get the job done." ❧

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Lawsuit prompts transgender policy at Biola

LA MIRADA, Calif. — A California Christian college is updating its sexuality policies to include issues of gender identity as a sister school in the state faces a discrimination lawsuit.

Biola University's work on a policy regarding transgender individuals coincides with former California Baptist University (CBU) student Domaine Javier's filing a lawsuit Feb. 25 for discriminatory expulsion from the Riverside, Calif., school affiliated with the California Southern Baptist Convention. CBU expelled Javier in 2011 after she revealed on an MTV reality show that she is biologically male. The university charged Javier with deception for checking "female" on her online application form.

"There is nothing in Cal Baptist's policies addressing gender identity issues or transgender people," Javier's attorney, Paul Southwick, told the Biola University campus newspaper. "The only thing that is discussed is homosexuality."

CBU also forbids "committing or attempting to engage in fraud, concealing identity, or using or attempting to use a false identity" and "knowingly furnishing false information" to a university official.

But since Javier views herself as a female and checked that as her gender on the application, Southwick said his client should be treated like any other student.

Biola, founded in 1908 as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, has admissions policies stricter than CBU, requiring that all students be professing Christians. A Biola University statement on human sexuality adopted in May 2012 rejects "any act of sexual intimacy between two persons of the same sex" and describes how to deal with individuals who "struggle with same-sex behavior, same-sex attraction and/or sexual orientation issues" but says nothing about gender identity. Biola officials hope to have a new gender identity statement in place by fall.

### GOP's Portman announces support for gay 'marriage'

WASHINGTON — Republican U.S. Sen. Rob Portman announced March 14 that he has reversed his longtime opposition to same-sex "marriage" after reconsidering the issue because his 21-year-old son, Will, is gay.

Portman said his son, a junior at Yale University, told his wife, Jane, and him that he's gay and "it was not a choice, it was who he is and that he had been that way since he could remember."

"It allowed me to think of this issue from a new perspective, and that's of a dad who loves his son a lot and wants him to have the same opportunities that his brother and sister would have — to have a relationship like Jane and I have had for over 26 years," Portman told reporters in an interview at his office.

The conversation the Portmans had with their son in 2011 led him to evolve on the issue after he consulted clergy members, friends — including former Vice President Dick Cheney, whose daughter is gay — and the Bible.

"The overriding message of love and compassion that I take from the Bible, and certainly the Golden Rule, and the fact that I believe we are all created by our maker, that has all influenced me in terms of my change on this issue," Portman said, adding that he feels that "in a way, this strengthens the institution of marriage."

Portman, who as a House member backed the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act now under review by the U.S. Supreme Court, said he now thinks parts of that bill should be repealed, though he has not considered introducing such legislation himself because economic policy issues are his specialty.

### Fuller Seminary names Labberton next president

PASADENA, Calif. — With one foot in the church and the other in the academy, Mark Labberton said he is ready for his new role as president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., the world's largest multid denominational seminary. He was the unanimous choice after trustees considered 250 nominees.

Labberton, who turned 60 on March 23, served for 16 years as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, Calif., a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation near the University of California campus. From there, he returned to Fuller, where he earned his master's degree, in 2009 to serve as a Fuller preaching professor and director of its Lloyd John Ogilvie Institute of Preaching.

Labberton is a disciple of the late John Stott, considered by many as a kind of "evangelical pope" who fostered evangelical scholarship and crafted the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, a statement of belief that unified evangelicals worldwide. ❧