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Main photo: Reuters; other photos: IMB

Baptists launch relief efforts for China earthquake survivors

Hearts around the world leaped when TV viewers saw rescuers pull a 3-month-old baby alive from the

rubble of a house in China's Sichuan province, but her mother was among more than 200 people killed by a magnitude-7.0 earthquake April 19.

An estimated 100,000 people are homeless and 11,800 injured by the quake.

BGR International, the Singapore headquarters of Baptist Global Response (BGR), is launching a six-month initiative to help survivors, Pat Melancon, BGR's managing director of disaster response and training, reported.

"BGR is assessing the available opportunities to respond. Fortunately, BGR-trained response teams are in the area," Melancon said. In 2008, a massive earthquake in Sichuan killed

more than 70,000 people. Training conducted in the aftermath of that disaster laid important groundwork for this response.

"As with any significant disaster, water is a lifeline issue that is one of the most critical to address. The current teams in place have experience in this area and are focusing on providing clean water to some of those affected," Melancon said. "As teams arrive in the affected area, they will assess the situation with the community members. The assessment will include looking at water needs, local resources and the local conditions that might facilitate meeting that need."

The quake knocked out communications and sent landslides onto mountain roads. A total of 18,000 soldiers have been dispatched to

clear roads, restore communications, help search for survivors and set up camps for the homeless, the official Xinhua news service reported. More than 1.5 million people are estimated to have been affected by the disaster.

Fresh water

BGR's initial response to the quake entailed five vehicles filled with supplies being sent into the quake zone, said Ben Wolf, who with his wife Pam leads BGR work in the Asia Rim. Six water treatment machines have been set up, with six more ready to go. Wolf expects at least 30 machines to be needed.

A total of \$50,000 in general relief funds has been allocated to initiate the effort. A disaster response like this could include food, water,

shelter and children's needs and would involve working with local volunteers, NGOs and government entities. The Chinese government has promised to deliver 30,000 tents, 50,000 quilts and 10,000 camp beds as soon as possible, according to news reports. Disease prevention efforts have been started.

At the onset of a disaster response the scales are tipped toward the physical impact upon a population, but before long the focus shifts toward the emotional and spiritual, Melancon added.

"The physical rebuilding of communities affected by this earthquake will be significant. However, the emotional carnage will only be repaired through caring hands, tender smiles, kind words and genuine

(See 'Pray,' page 3)



**NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER IS
THURSDAY, MAY 2**

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NationalDayofPrayer.org



COMMENT

The Church: A Future with Young Adults?

To listen to some religious pundits, one would think the sky is falling. Almost one-third of young adults are not affiliated with any religious group. A little more than one-third (37 percent) of emerging adults (18–23 year olds) say they are losing the faith they had as high schoolers. Many in this group say they are “religious” but not active in a church. In short, young adults are the least religiously committed of any age group in the United States according to the General Social Survey, which dates back to 1972.

That is why some are asking if there is a future for the church with today’s young adults.

University of Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith sees the statistics in a different light. He says, “There’s more religious stability across these age groups (young adults and emerging adults) than decline.”

Smith, the lead researcher of the National Study of Youth and Religion, a study of 2,500 young people across the nation, pointed out that the study found 56 percent of emerging adults remain fairly stable in their levels of religiousness. Seven percent say their faith life is growing.

Seventy-two percent of the young adults said they had positive feelings about the religious tradition in which they were reared. Almost half said they would like to attend worship services more often.

Importance of faith

In a parallel study called the Panel Study of American Religion and Ethnicity, more than half of the young adults said religious faith was very important, extremely important or the most important part of their lives.

Smith found that those who maintained a high degree of religious faith into adulthood started off as teens with a high degree of religious faith. Those who declined in their level of religious involvement started out with lower levels of involvement.

The single most important predictor of a young adult’s attitude toward religion was that person’s parents, Smith reported. Also important were re-



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

lationships with nonparental adults in the young person’s life and the religious practices of the teen.

The study found, “Young adults raised in a religious home where faith is taken seriously and practiced regularly (most likely) will continue those traditions. Parents with halfhearted attempts at inculcating faith (most likely) wind up with children who are less religiously committed as adults.”

Unfortunately, many parents of children in these age groups conclude they are no longer relevant to their children’s lives. They have been replaced by peer pressure. Not true, Smith says. Emerging adults want their parents’ love and are eager to engage them.

How strange it is that parents are urged to monitor their children’s activities from the athletic fields to social media uses to signs of drug and alcohol abuse. But when it comes to religion, the church and faith in God, parents are supposed to be hands off.

The outcome is predictable when that pattern is followed. Teens with fewer rules attend church less often and end up as young adults who attach less importance to a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Young people long for parents and for churches, the study concluded, to help them deal with

the ultimate issues of life and the great moral truths of Scripture.

The church’s role plays out in two ways. One is through the influence of nonparental adults. Every teen needs someone to talk to about the formative issues of life. For those young and emerging adults for whom faith remained important, that person or persons came from their faith community. It was someone who knew the young person, someone who interacted with them. It may have been a Sunday School teacher or a youth leader. It may have been a member of the extended family for whom faith was important or a family friend.

In some ways the adult became a substitute for the parent because the youth liked and trusted the adult. The adult modeled the kind of behavior that invited a relationship that went beyond the casual friendliness of congregational life.

Young adults, emerging adults and teens all need mentors in their lives and there is no better place to provide those mentors than the church.

A second contribution of the church is to be true to its teachings. Today’s culture values openness. But there is a great deal of research showing that trying to appeal to young adults by being open to all beliefs often has the opposite

effect. Being open to every idea or practice can reinforce a culture where truth and moral values are relative, thus making the church and other religious organizations irrelevant.

A teen’s religious practice was the third primary indicator of how important faith in God will most likely be in that person’s life as a young adult. Religious practices were more important than participating in a missions trip, which had little, if any, long-lasting impact on participants.

Instead lifelong influencers were frequent times of personal prayer and Scripture reading, devotional times and personal religious experiences. For centuries these practices have formed the foundation of a Christian life and they still do.

You may want to read Smith’s book, “Souls in Transitions: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.” But whether you read it or not, remember the importance of Christian parents transmitting their Christian values; of churches providing strong, caring and accessible adult role models and mentors; of lifelong teaching about the importance of basic Christian disciplines. When these are present, faith in God and participation in church usually survive all the challenges of transitioning into adulthood.

So to the pundits of doom and gloom, the sky is not falling. As long as Christians remember these simple truths, the church will have a future with every generation.

Christian
Home Week is
May 12–18.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

INSPIRED TO WRITE

I am glad that my church, Anniston First Baptist at McClellan, provides *The Alabama Baptist* to the members who request it.

It has been a source of information and inspiration to me. One such article that struck a chord was a July 21, 2011, article titled “Unique form of disaster relief comes in grape, green apple.”

In the article was a statement about a small girl from Chalybeate Springs in Lawrence County clutching a tattered teddy rescued from the rubble left by the tornado that had hit that area.

That statement inspired me to write a small book titled “The Tattered Teddy” to be used by anyone who would be ministering to children in the aftermath of a tornado. The book includes

crafts to be used with the children. The book is in PDF format and is free to anyone who can use it. It can be downloaded from my new website, www.saltydiamonds.com.

Beverly Jennings
Anniston, Ala.





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

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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Many at church not helping others grow, LifeWay survey shows

Almost three out of every four churchgoers say they have significant relationships with people at church, but less than half are intentionally helping other believers grow in their faith, according to a study by LifeWay Research.

The survey of Protestant churchgoers identifies "building relationships" as one of eight attributes of discipleship that consistently show up in the lives of maturing Christians. The survey is part of a larger study identifying traits of transformational discipleship.

Results of the "building relationships" questions reveal a seeming disconnect between churchgoers actually pressing into new relationships or participating in discipling other Christians.

While 74 percent agree they have developed significant relationships with people at their church, response to the statement "I intentionally try to get to know new people I meet at church" garnered 53 percent agreement, including only 1 in 6 churchgoers who strongly agree. Additionally, only 42 percent say they intentionally spend time with other believers in order to help them grow in their faith. Twenty-eight percent say they do not help others grow.

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, pointed out that, "Advertisers know it takes multiple introductions to get someone's attention. Unfortunately, a visitor to church may have to meet six people before someone cares enough to get to know them."

The research reveals the characteristic that best predicts better building of relationships at church is attendance of small classes or groups of adults.

According to the survey, 33 percent of churchgoers attend classes or groups for adults (such as Sunday School, Bible study, small groups or adult Bible fellowships) four or more times in a typical month. Fourteen percent attend two or three times a month.

The highest percentage — 41 percent — indicate they do not attend such groups at all in a typical month, while 12 percent attend once a month. Four out of 10 churchgoers say they do not attend church groups.

"The Bible frames relationships among believers as a proactive investment in other Christians," McConnell said. "In fact, Hebrews 10:24 refers to the need to exhibit concern for other Christians in ways that encourage love and good works."

Other actions that predict more spiritual



BP graphic

maturity in building relationships include praying in a group with other Christians more often, praying for one's church and church leaders and having responsibilities at church.

Minimal investment

"Most attendees have friends at church, but only a minority invest time to help other believers develop their faith," McConnell said. "It is as if churchgoers arrive to sit together as spectators for a game rather than arriving as player-coaches who work together and develop each other's game."

The findings on "building relationships" are part of the largest discipleship study of its kind. To learn more about the transformational discipleship research visit LifeWayResearch.com. The transformational discipleship assessment (TDA) is available at TDA.LifeWay.com.

The survey of 2,930 American adults who attend a Protestant church once a month or more was conducted Oct. 14-22, 2011. A demographically balanced online panel was used for the interviewing. Respondents could respond in English, Spanish or French. (BP)

Pray for rescue workers, survivors

(continued from page 1)
concern," Melancon said. "Consistent concern and practical assistance throughout the whole tipping process enables a community to recover with strength and vigor."

"The Chinese outlook is often to the hope of the future. The hopes of many families came crashing down as they lost both their dwellings and their children," Melancon continued. "For the poor, even a slight disastrous event has a significant impact on daily life. A disaster of this magnitude has left many feeling overwhelmed by the financial loss, wondering

if they will ever get back to normal again.

"Many families will never wake up the same way again. While the sun will set in the same place and rise in the same place, their lives have been permanently reoriented by the trauma of this event."

BGR partners coordinating the response listed several ways concerned friends could pray for the crisis, especially that rescue workers would be able to find survivors and rescue them and that response teams would be emotionally strengthened and have discernment and wisdom as they make decisions about how to focus relief efforts. (BP)



Main photo by Caroline Summers/Samford University; other photos courtesy of Beeson Divinity School

Beeson celebrates 25 years of providing theological preparation for ministry

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Twenty-five years seems like a long time to us," said Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham as he reflected on the institution's 25th anniversary this year.

"There is a sense of reward that comes from seeing a little baby acorn develop into a sapling of a tree. I don't think we're a giant oak yet, but we're not a baby acorn anymore either. We've reached toddlerhood and maybe a little bit beyond." And in this quarter-century timeframe, George noted, the school has developed "a solid community of theological preparation for ministry."

A native of Chattanooga, Tenn., George attended the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and then Harvard where he completed his master of divinity and doctoral work. He was appointed professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., a place he had assumed he would forever stay. "I never had any idea about going anywhere else or doing anything else," he said.

But one day in the spring of 1988, George received an unexpected phone call from then-president of Samford University, Thomas Corts. Corts explained that the school had received a gift for the expressed purpose of starting a new divinity school on campus, and he wanted to speak with George about becoming founding dean.

George met with both Corts, who retired

from Samford in 2006 and died in 2009, and Ralph Beeson, the school's benefactor. It was during this meeting that George received a sense of the vision for this new school.

Major guidelines

George said several major guidelines for the school were emphasized by Beeson, who before his death in 1990 had provided the largest gift from a living individual in Samford's history to establish the first divinity school at a Baptist college or university in the nation. First, Beeson desired that it be a school that would train pastors who can preach. He also wanted a school to be orthodox and evangelical in its theological commitments and to have a vision for the whole world.

"And ... to make this an interdenominational school," George added. "He was himself a Presbyterian, his father was a Methodist, he married a Baptist, and so he thought we have something to learn from one another."

Once back in Louisville considering the

offer, George reflected on two passages of Scripture. One was Psalm 119, and the other was the account in Hebrews 11 where Abraham was called and went out not knowing where he was going but was looking forward to the city whose designer and builder is God.

George went on to accept the position as dean with an "inner assurance," never doubting his decision. "One of my best friends (had) said to me, 'Timothy, (are) you sure you want to do this? Anybody who would try to do this has to be either completely crazy or called by God.' And so I remember thinking about that as I was driving [to Birmingham]. Which is it: am I completely crazy or called by God? Only time will tell," he laughed.

George began in his new role the summer of 1988 with just one employee and no seminary facilities. During his first day on campus, he spent much of his time in prayer. "I ... was praying that God would send those students to Beeson that He desired to be here, that we would be able to train in the right way. And they just began to come," he recalled.

"I ... was praying that God would send those students to Beeson that He desired to be here, that we would be able to train in the right way. And they just began to come."

Timothy George
dean, Beeson Divinity School

Little publicity had been arranged about Beeson that first summer, and the news about the school traveled primarily by word of mouth. In all, 32 students formed the school's inaugural class.

One of those first students was Norfleete Day, a librarian at Birmingham Public Library. Shortly after the school's founding was announced, Day had sensed God calling her into a vocation to teach the Bible. That calling motivated her to enroll part-time as a student at Beeson, a place where there was a "keen sense of Christian community and fellowship among us all," she said. "We got to know each other's story — what had brought us to Beeson — and we shared a sense of being part of something special."

Founding faculty members

By the time Day and others in the entering class had arrived on campus for the first day of classes, two full-time faculty members had been hired. These men, along with George, taught all the courses with a goal to build a three-year master of divinity program year by year.

As Day was preparing to enter her final year at the school, she was asked if she would teach a section of introductory Greek. "It gave me a real-life opportunity to try out my calling, and I enjoyed it immensely," she said, adding she was invited back to teach during the summers while at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, earning her Ph.D.

But Day's story at Beeson didn't end there — she was eventually offered a position on the faculty. "I saw it (as) another fulfillment of the journey God had embarked me on when He called me," she said. "Also, it was a great honor that those who had taught me

wanted me to join them as a faculty member.”

In its early stages the seminary faced some opposition, in part because there had never been a divinity school on any Baptist college or university campus. “We were the first,” George said. “The idea back then was you go to a place like Samford for undergraduate studies and then you go to one of the six SBC seminaries for theological training. ... We were breaking the ... mold and creating a new model.”

A church historian by training, George said he tends to think of things in terms of historical models and he wanted Beeson to be a school that “reflected the deep, rich roots of the Christian faith.” Despite the school pioneering a new model of theological education in terms of structure and location, the goal wasn’t to reinvent the wheel in regard to curriculum and basic orientation, he said.

One element of the school that was as important in those early years as it is today is the concept of community. George noted that if theological education is merely the transfer of data, a person doesn’t need to go to seminary. “Just go and check out a book at the library or get it online,” he said. “Why waste your time and money going to seminary if that’s all it’s about? But we think it’s about something else. I tell our ... prospective students, ‘We’re after your soul.’ ... That’s a different process that requires relationship ... vulnerability ... the kind of openness to the Holy Spirit that just learning facts, data, names, plans (and) programs doesn’t provide.”

To nurture that sense of community, Beeson students are members of a faculty-led mentoring group that meets weekly. They also worship together one day each week during the semester and share a meal together afterward.

The class sizes are kept intentionally small, allowing students to reap the benefits of low student-to-teacher ratios. Robert Smith Jr., professor of divinity at Beeson who teaches Christian preaching, said his class sizes allow him to meet with students one-on-one about seven times during the fall semester. “Ralph Waldo Beeson ... wanted the school to be denominationally diverse and to be numerically small” so that classes would not be overwhelmingly large, Smith said.

Smith, who began teaching at Beeson in 1997, said George has laid a “tremendous foundation” for the school. He added that Beeson remains solid in its theology, it is relational in its way of reaching people and it seeks to attract the best students without being tuition-driven.

When asked about Beeson’s significant achievements in its first 25 years, one aspect George noted is the students the school has graduated. “The thing I most enjoy about my job is talking with these students and hearing from them and seeing what they’re doing in the Lord’s work ... all around the world,” he said, adding this May will mark the graduation of the school’s 1,000th student.

He also pointed to the “strong academic programs” and to the published works of the faculty, which he called “outstanding con-

tributions to the field of theological scholarship.”

“Over the years God just sent us some wonderful faculty. I just have to say I’m really proud of our faculty — they are fantastic men and women of faith, of learning,” George said.

Looking to the future of Beeson, George noted the development of the Beeson League of Churches. Some churches have already signed up for this opportunity to become a partner with the school in the preparation and the support of Beeson students.

There also is a capital campaign to endow the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity. “Dr. Carter is a member of our faculty, he’s also a trustee of the university, a long-time pastor and former president of our state convention,” George said. “We want to name this for him because we want to represent in the future the kind of solid commitment to preaching and pastoral leadership that he’s represented in his own life.”

Ministry leadership

Carter, the James H. Chapman Fellow of Pastoral Ministry at Beeson and pastor emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, teaches ministry leadership development at Beeson where he instructs on how to do the work of the ministry in the local church.

Carter said he believes Beeson has a reputation “as being a divinity school that can integrate both the intellect and deepest commitments of the Christian faith.” He added, “I think that Beeson is anchored to the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. That’s rare in many academic institutions.”

One hope Carter has for the future of Beeson is that it would be on the “cutting edge turning out increasingly more and more pastors who can preach.” He noted the celebration of the school’s first 25 years is exciting, and it has come a long way from its beginnings.

Smith agreed, noting what has happened in this first 25 years is great and the best is

yet to come. “I’m very hopeful that the next 25 years” will stand on the shoulders of this 25-year period, he said.

As part of Beeson’s 25th anniversary celebration, the entire student body and faculty of the divinity school met at Ralph Beeson’s statue on Samford’s campus April 23, symbolic of the divinity school’s beginnings and Ralph Beeson’s vision. The group then processed to another part of campus where they read Scripture, said the Lord’s Prayer and entered Hodges Chapel for a special service singing the divinity school hymn, “For All the Saints.” The speaker for the service was Richard Bewes, who for many years served as pastor of All Souls Church in London.

“Twenty-five years is significant but we have a long way to go, God willing,” George said. “We’ve had struggles, we’ve had challenges, we still do, but God has seen us through those and I think the future is as bright as the promises of God.”

For more information about Beeson Divinity School, visit www.beesondivinity.com.



Photo courtesy of Beeson Divinity School
Students gather in Hodges Chapel at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

My time at Beeson Divinity School has been characterized by challenge, exposure and growth. I have been challenged by the rigorous academic task set before me through my study of biblical languages, as well as history and doctrine. I have been exposed to many wonderful brothers and sisters from differing evangelical denominations whom I can learn from and partner with in the spread of the gospel. Both of these aspects to my time at Beeson have really been the soil in which God has given the growth. I look more like my Savior Jesus Christ today than I did a year and a half ago. All of this is due in no small part to my time within the Beeson community.

Eric Parker, divinity student

My time thus far has been such a great experience. Great long-term friendships are being cultivated as we grow in Christ and journey together during this seminary experience. I have wonderful teachers that use an open door policy for their office hours (even if I don’t have their classes at that present time) to talk with me and encourage me as I further my education. Beeson has made my big move from Texas very well worth it.

Demetrea Weakly, divinity student

My experience at Beeson has truly been a gift from God. It has equipped me for service to the church in the context of a community that is richly diverse yet deeply committed to God and His Word. Above all, however, Beeson has pushed me to be radically Christ-centered, and for that reason alone, I will be forever grateful.

Brandon Bennett, divinity student

Since my conversion in the context of the emerging first-generation church in Mongolia, I began an amazing journey with Christ in a personal way and through the community of the believers. It was vital for me to be equipped in sound theological doctrine and have a clear understanding of the Scripture and the faithful proclamation (of) His truth. My experience with theological training at Beeson Divinity School is like theological SEALS training, tough but encouraging. I have truly benefited from this experience and am highly eager to bring my learning and training into Mongolia to continue be a part of (the) Christian movement of the first generation in my country.

Gantumur Badrakh, divinity student



Photo by Caroline Summers/Samford University
Members of the platform party wait for the procession to begin on April 23. Pictured in foreground are retired faculty member Norfleete Day (left) and Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland (center).

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BETHEL

► **Pine Hill Church** will host the quartet Tribute in concert May 11, 7 p.m. Chris Kynard is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Mount Pleasant Church, Uriah**, will hold revival May 2-5. Thursday-Saturday services will be at 6:30 p.m. and the homecoming service Sunday will be at 11 a.m. Dinner will follow. Cecil Taylor, professor of Christian studies at the University of Mobile, will speak for revival and homecoming. Kathy Johnson will lead special music. William T. (Pete) Dunn is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► Janet Erwin, editor of *Missions Mosaic*, will speak at the May 7 meeting of the Tuesday Morning Missions of **McElwain Church, Birmingham**, at 10 a.m. in the fellowship hall. Lunch will follow. Joby Tricquet is pastor. ► **Pioneer Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate homecoming May 5, 10:30 a.m. A potluck lunch (the church will provide meat) and singing will follow. Pastor Darryl Castleberry will speak.

COFFEE

► **Victoria Church, Jack**, will celebrate homecoming May 5. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m., choir singing will be at 10:30 a.m., Crossminded Ministries will sing at 11 a.m. and Donnie Marler will speak at 11:30 a.m. A covered dish lunch will follow. Every-

one is invited. Marler is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Blue Eye Church, Lincoln**, will hold revival. Charles Stone will speak and Mike McBurnett will provide music. A special Mother's Day service will be May 12, 11 a.m. and May 13-15 services will be at 6 p.m. There will be special singing every service. Jacky Morgan is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Red Oak Church, Floral**, will celebrate homecoming May 5, 10 a.m. Former pastor Jim Duck will speak and Dudley Maddox will direct music. There will be no Sunday School. Lunch will follow the service and everyone is invited.

DEKALB

► Bob Smith, music evangelist from Huntsville, will perform at **Ruhama Church, Fort Payne**, on May 19, 10:30 a.m. A fellowship meal will follow the service. There also will be a time of recognition for those serving in the church's youth and children's ministries. Chris Murdock is pastor.

HALE

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host The 39er's C.L.U.B. (Christians Living Under the Blood!) nondenominational luncheon May 14, 11 a.m. Michael Mynatt, pastor of Hillcrest Church, Enterprise, will speak. For reservations by May 7 call 334-684-9617. Mike Shirah is pastor.

SHELBY

► The American Red Cross will conduct training at **First Church, Indian Springs**, on May 11, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. The training is open to anyone in the Birmingham area and lunch will be provided. This session will train people who may be interested in volunteering at a Red Cross shelter location in the area. Anyone can be trained, but to be approved as a Red Cross volunteer worker an application and background check must be completed and approved at no cost to the volunteer. The application is online at www.red-cross.org/alabama. If you plan to attend the training call the church office at 205-988-3662. Charlie Dale is pastor. ► **Mount Zion Church, Westover**, will celebrate homecoming May 5, 10 a.m. with The Hoggle Family as the guest singers. A covered dish lunch will follow at noon. Everyone is welcome. Delford Isbell is pastor.

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Raymond Parkin

Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies

Raymond Parkin, a former Alabama Baptist pastor who served in ministry for 55 years, died Feb. 28. He was 81. Parkin served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

He accepted the call to preach at Katherwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, in 1957 and was ordained at Dolomite Baptist Church the next year.

He served in Alabama as pastor of Enon Baptist Church, Centreville; Smithville Baptist Church, Bessemer; and Vinemont Baptist Church.

He also was the founding pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Vinemont.

In addition, he led revivals throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas and Ohio and served as pastor of several churches in Mississippi.

At the time of his death, he was three days from his last Sunday as pastor of Baxterville Baptist Church, Lumberton, Miss.

Parkin is survived by his wife of 59 years, Wanda; four children; and three grandchildren. (Julie Payne)



PARKIN

Military official says malware to blame for SBC website block

A military official says malware was to blame for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) website being blocked on some military bases.

Lt. Col. Damien Pickart, a Defense Department spokesman, said the military's software filters detected malware at SBC.net and blocked the website. Malware is software intended to damage or disable a computer, often present because of hackers. The malware since has been removed off the website, and the denomination's website unblocked, he said.

'Not intentional'

"The Department of Defense is not intentionally blocking access to this site," Pickart told *The Tennessean* in an email. "The Department of Defense strongly supports the religious rights of service members, to include their ability to access religious websites like that of the SBC."

Social media sites were buzzing April 25 over allegations that the military had blocked the website for other reasons. FoxNews first reported that Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains on military installations had tried to access SBC.net and had received a message: "The site you have requested has been blocked by Team CONUS (C-TNOSC/RCERT-CONUS) due to hostile content."

The Associated Press wrote a story summarizing what had happened, and it was carried on websites around the world. Some Christians focused on the phrase "hostile content" and wondered if the denomination's traditional positions on abortion, gay "marriage" and the Bible were the reason the military was blocking the site.

Before the malware discovery, SBC leaders had stated that to assume the military had "targeted" the site was "premature" concern. (BP)



By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Someone You Should Know

MAGGIE WALSH

Ariton Baptist Church
Dale Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Jeremiah 29:11
FAVORITE HYMN: Revelation Song
(not a hymn, but I do love it!)

HOBBIES: Reading, playing intramural sports, directing dinner theaters
FAMILY STATUS: Youngest of four



WALSH

Maggie Walsh, 21, is a graduating senior at Troy University majoring in broadcast journalism and minoring in communication studies. One of her extracurricular activities is acting as regional representative for The Alabama Baptist newspaper, a role she began in August 2012. As regional rep, she networks with Dale Baptist Association pastors and leaders (including her father David Walsh, pastor of Ariton Baptist Church) to learn about what God is doing in their churches and communities. She then relays that information to The Alabama Baptist, sometimes getting the opportunity to write an article about an event in Dale County. Walsh also had an internship with the newspaper in the summer of 2012.

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

A: My family has been a very strong influence in my faith journey. The youngest of four chil-

dren, I remember seeing something in my siblings that was different about them, which is what made me first realize my need for a faith like theirs. I have always looked to my siblings and parents as examples of how real faith manifests itself.

Q: When and how were you led into your work with The Alabama Baptist?

A: I was looking for a summer internship in the spring of 2012 and was getting disheartened because I wasn't hearing back from anywhere that I had sent a resumé to. One night in March, I finally told God that it's all in His hands — I'm not going to keep trying to force something that He has complete control over. Once I let go of the reins, God showed me the application for TAB's internship the very next day. The rest is history.

Q: What does this work demand?

A: Writing demands that I take initiative and actively search out stories and information from

sources and organizations. It makes me step out of my comfort zone and grow more confident as an individual and, hopefully, an established writer.

Q: How do family members support you in this work?

A: My family is so encouraging. Any time my confidence wavers or writer's block invades my mind, all I have to do is talk to any one of my family members to have my confidence restored and the block obliterated.

Q: What difference will this work make for you in the future?

A: I see my writing as a tool to serve others by providing them with uplifting stories, informative articles and knowledge for their everyday life. My goal is to become the kind of writer [who] has a positive impact on the lives of everyone who reads their work. I know I'm not there yet, but I try to consciously work to improve my style and delivery to become the writer God desires me to be.

Immense influence

Tebow encourages attendees at UMobile Leadership Banquet to 'pour your life into what matters'

On the football field in college, as a professional football player with the Denver Broncos and the New York Jets, in everyday life, there is adversity. When faced with adversity, Tim Tebow turns to Scripture. "I don't know what the future holds, but I do know Who holds my future. Regardless of the obstacles, regardless of the tribulations, regardless of the trials, God's not going to let me go, and He's not going to let you go," Tebow told an audience of more than 1,800 at the eighth annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Leadership Banquet on April 18.

UMobile President Mark Foley summed up the message of the annual fundraising banquet in one word: Influence.

"Tonight is about influence — the capacity or power of an individual to affect the actions, behavior and opinions of others," Foley told the audience filling the Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center on the waterfront in downtown Mobile.

Tebow, whose athletic success and outspoken Christian faith has made him "one of the most influential persons in American culture today," captured the attention of a nation "by careful stewarding of his skill and talent as an athlete, and his unwavering conviction to honor God," Foley said.

Performances by Voices of Mobile and the UMobile

Jazz Band entertained the crowd while showcasing exceptionally talented students from the UMobile Center for Performing Arts.

Tebow talked about faith, football and what really matters in life in a relaxed Q-and-A format with hosts Phil Savage, executive director of the Senior Bowl, and Neal Ledbetter, director of Campus Life at UMobile.

Tebow said that shortly after winning the Heisman Trophy his sophomore year at the University of Florida, he had the opportunity to travel to Thailand and speak to 400 missionaries serving in southeast Asia, including his sister. The son of missionaries who served in the Philippines, Tebow wondered on the flight over what he could share.

'For the cause of Christ'

"I'm a 19- or 20-year-old playing a silly game called football. These are missionaries who are putting their lives on the line every single day for the gospel, for the cause of Christ. What do I have to share with them?" he told the audience.

Tebow recalled the verses on humility his mother had made him memorize as a child when he was bragging about his athletic ability. He thought specifically of Matthew 23:12, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Tebow said the missionaries were humbling themselves and serving, not so people would give them a pat on the back or say "good job," but because they truly wanted to make a difference.

So Tebow told them, "If the world could see you



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

Tim Tebow

through God's eyes, you would be the ones winning the Heisman Trophy, not me. Not me. I play a silly game called football, but you are pouring your life into what matters every single day, and that's what makes you great."

Tebow said playing football is just a little part of the many things he would like to do with his life. Among those are helping children through the Tebow Foundation and the Tebow CURE Hospital in the Philippines, the nation in which he was born.

He said he wants to be an encouragement to others, just as more than 130 people were an encouragement to him moments before the banquet began.

"I probably had in that line the most people I've taken pictures with say they were praying for me. I want to let you know I really appreciate that. You never know what that can do for someone," he said.

Foley said Tebow's influence is immense — and so is the influence of a Christian university committed to preparing graduates to be people of faith with an understanding of responsibility to God, to others and to self-sacrifice as a foundational principle of a healthy society.

"I want you to understand that is the purpose and will continue to be the purpose of the University of Mobile," Foley said. "It matters not the contrary opinions of government or the prevailing winds of society. This is where this institution will stand. And we will say so proudly and without hesitation."

Speaking passionately and pausing after each word, Foley declared, "We will follow Jesus Christ," as the audience burst into applause. (UMobile)

"If the world could see you through God's eyes, you would be the ones winning the Heisman Trophy, not me. Not me. I play a silly game called football."

Tim Tebow
professional football player



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

An audience of more than 1,800 at the eighth annual University of Mobile Leadership Banquet hear from professional football player Tim Tebow on April 18.

Boy Scouts from the Dallas area gather at a rally to show their support for the traditional policy of the Scouts, which encourages them to be morally straight.



BP photo

New Scout proposal

Questions linger about role of gays in Boy Scouts

Members at the Boy Scouts national convention in May will consider a proposal that would leave in place the prohibition on homosexual Scout leaders but would allow youth who identify as gay to join, it was announced April 19.

The proposed policy, unanimously approved by the Boy Scouts executive committee, differs significantly from a proposal that was discussed in February that would have allowed openly gay leaders and youth to join. That policy would have made it a "local option," whereby each sponsoring organization would decide the policy. Under the new proposal, there is a national standard and no local option.

"No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone," the proposed resolution states in part.

'Sense of right and wrong'

The resolution criticizes sexual activity by youth, saying Scouting "is a youth program, and any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting." Two paragraphs later it further says that "youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life."

The Boy Scouts leadership appeared poised in early February to lift its prohibition on gay Scout leaders and youth but — facing pressure from its base — decided to put the matter before its 1,400 voting

members at the national convention, which will be in May.

Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, was outspoken earlier this year in urging the Boy Scouts to keep their current policy. "We said in January we wished the Scouts would listen to the whole scouting family, not just a few," Page said April 19.

"The leadership listened. Chief among the concerns they heard is the influence of adult leaders on impressionable youth. Though this resolution is more acceptable to those who hold a biblical form of morality than what was being considered before, we would still prefer no change in the policy. A No vote keeps the current policy in place, an outcome we would overwhelmingly support."

Also on April 19, the Boy Scouts released the results of a series of surveys it conducted.

Among the findings:

- ▶ 61 percent of adult Scout members favor the current policy, while 34 percent oppose it.
- ▶ 61 percent of Boy Scout parents support the current policy, while 50 percent of Cub Scout parents back it (45 percent of Cub Scout parents oppose it).
- ▶ 51 percent of major donors support the current policy while 33 percent oppose it. But a majority of Fortune 500 companies want to see the policy changed.

▶ A majority of teens ages 16–18 in the Boy Scouts program oppose the current policy. A percentage was not given.

The Boy Scouts also said that parents, teens and the Scouting community "do not favor" a local option as proposed in February. (BP)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Lawsuit against Missouri Baptist camp dismissed

CAMDENTON, Mo. — Camden County Circuit Court Judge Ralph H. Jaynes has dismissed legal action against Windermere Baptist Conference Center and several financial institutions the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC) executive board filed in Camden County on Nov. 1, 2006. The MBC sought the return of about 1,300 acres at the Lake of the Ozarks, including 943 acres Windermere transferred to National City Bank of the Midwest in late 2005 as part of a debt-restructuring plan. The bank sold the property to Windermere Development Co. Inc.

From the Camden County case's beginning, Windermere attorneys argued that it mirrored legal action the MBC took in Cole County against Windermere, the Missouri Baptist Foundation, Missouri Baptist University, The Baptist Home and *Word & Way* in 2002. The convention filed the Cole County case against the five in an effort to rescind changes in each entity's governing documents that allow it to elect its own trustees. In 2008, then-Cole County Judge Richard Callahan ruled Windermere had acted legally — a ruling the Missouri Court of Appeals, Western District, upheld in 2009.

In its Camden County lawsuit, the convention claimed Windermere trustees defrauded the MBC because the articles of incorporation did not include a provision that the MBC had to approve any changes in Windermere's governing documents. Consequently, the deed should be rescinded and the property returned to the convention. Windermere attorneys noted that because the process was approved at several levels — including by messenger vote — the MBC had to have been aware the provision had not been included.

Reached by email, MBC attorney Michael Whitehead said convention leaders would consider options, including an appeal to the Missouri Court of Appeals, Southern District, in Springfield.

New Orleans Seminary adds academic division

NEW ORLEANS — New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's (NOBTS) trustees approved a new academic division and new degrees during their spring meeting April 17. The board also elected three new faculty members. Trustees voted to move the counseling program from the seminary's Pastoral Ministries Division and the social work program from the Christian Education Division into a new academic group called the Division of Church and Community Ministries. The division brings together two programs with similar purposes. Ian Jones, professor of psychology and counseling, will serve as chair of the new division.

"Counseling and social work are closer to each other than the other disciplines in Christian education and pastoral ministry," NOBTS Provost Steve Lemke said. "We believe there is a synergism that can develop between the two programs." While state licensing will be available for graduates in these programs, Lemke said the division's main focus will be on church-based community ministries — "preparing graduates to serve in ministries such as church counseling centers, ministry-based evangelism centers in churches, Christian children's homes and senior adult homes."

Southern Baptist DR teams assist flooded Midwest

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams in three state conventions are involved in ministry efforts following major Midwest flooding that has claimed four lives. Heavy mid-April rainfall has kept rivers in Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Indiana and Michigan in flood stage, according to the National Weather Service. More rain and snow were expected at press time, putting North Dakota and other states at risk.

The Baptist Convention of Michigan deployed a feeding unit to Anchor Baptist Church, Grand Rapids, and were preparing 200 meals a day at press time. Missouri Baptist Convention teams are involved in mud-out work in De Soto, Mo. Illinois Southern Baptists, meanwhile, set up a feeding unit at Woodland Baptist Church, Peoria, and were preparing 1,000 meals a day at press time.

Baptist Bible school in Thailand rebuilds after fire

MAE LA, Thailand — A graduation ceremony of the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College in the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand, which was destroyed by fire one year ago, was held April 14. "The building is completed, the students also completed their school and yesterday we celebrated the dedication of the building to God," Saw Simon, founder and principal of the school, wrote April 15. "I would like to say thank you very much to all of you [for] your visits, your letters, your email, your encouragement, your donations and your prayers."

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'Tested and tried'

FBC West, Texas shares hope, encouragement with town after deadly fertilizer plant explosion

As pastor John Crowder stepped onto the makeshift altar in a field, the sun peeked through the overcast morning in West, Texas. Words of hope pierced through the cool morning air as members of First Baptist Church, West, gathered for their first worship service since an April 17 explosion at a local fertilizer plant.

The huge blast killed 15 people and injured at least 200, ripped up apartments, set homes ablaze and damaged the church.

As Crowder preached, the crowd remained largely quiet. Couples held hands. Mothers and fathers put their arms around their children. Before and after the service, hugs were plentiful and tears were scattered.

Preaching from Psalm 46, Crowder emphasized that God is the refuge for West's citizens. In the midst of losing friends and homes, the townspeople will continue to suffer, the pastor confessed as he struggled at times to hold back his emotions.

"We have more questions than answers," Crowder said.

"We have lost so many of our friends and neighbors. ... As scary as this has been, we don't have to be afraid," he said, encouraging people to lean on God during such trying times. At an individual's lowest point, he said, God often most clearly shows His power. "When you reach the point where you are on your knees crying for help, you have just reached the point of your greatest strength."

God already is bringing a variety of support for the community, Crowder said. Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery of the Baptist General Convention of Texas already has been providing assistance for Crowder, his family and the congregation and has committed to help for the long-term.

Lots of help

Numerous Texas Baptist Men volunteers were present during the worship service. The organization has a laundry and a shower unit in the area, and a child-care unit is in operation. More than 1,500 boxes have been distributed to residents for salvaging their belongings as they return to see their damaged homes for the first time. Chaplains also are on location.

Dallas Baptist University (DBU) was set to send students to First, West, to lead a Disciple Now youth retreat. After the



Hugs are plentiful and tears are scattered as FBC West, Texas, holds its first worship service since the April 17 fertilizer plant explosion. BP photo

explosion, the church was prepared to cancel the event. DBU President Gary Cook called Crowder and offered to charter a bus that would bring the youth to DBU for the weekend.

Chris Liebrum, who leads Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery and participated in the worship service, said he believes God will use the members of First, West, in a mighty way.

"First Baptist Church in West will be a major force in the rebuilding of that community," Liebrum said. "Texas Baptists will stand with them and provide the resources needed so that in Christ's name they can bring hope to so many who have lost family, friends and possessions."

Twelve of the people who died were firefighters. They were honored during a memorial service April 25 at the Ferrell Center at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

During the service, President Barack Obama, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and others praised the courage of the firefighters.

"The Book of Psalms tells us, 'For You, O God, have tested us, You have tried us, and You have brought us to a place of abundance,'" Obama said at the beginning of his remarks. "You have been tested, West — you have been tried — but you will always be surrounded by the abundance of love."

Obama also praised Crowder for encouraging his people and the community and for holding outdoor services on Sunday at the damaged church.

The pain West residents are feeling is deep and difficult, Crowder said. Nothing can change what happened. Only God can carry the community through this situation. "What happened here on [April 17] is awful. But God is bigger than this." (BP, ABP)

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Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

Where in the world can you get 4.45 percent growth on money in an account that's federally insured and watch that percentage increase when rates start to climb? In a reverse mortgage growing line of credit, that's where!

Reverse mortgages pay the homeowner a percentage of the appraised value of their home. This percentage is based on age — the older a person is, the higher the percentage. Let's say that percentage nets \$60,000 for the homeowner and the homeowner decides to leave the funds in a growing line of credit. In one year, their line of credit would have grown to \$62,725. In five years, it would grow to \$74,917.

The current 4.45 percent rate will more than likely increase in the future, because the foundation of the rate is LIBOR (Lon-

don Interbank Offered Rate) and currently Libor is 0.20 percent. It can't go down much farther, right? I believe rates will start increasing in the future, but I don't know when. If I knew that, I'd be a billionaire.



Jimmy Dixon

The point is, when LIBOR increases, so will your growth rate, because the foundation will push the rate up just as a mole pushes up the earth up over its back.

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Pastors speak up for immigrants during D.C. visit

Megachurch pastors joined other evangelical Christian leaders on Capitol Hill to speak up for some in their own congregations on the same day legislation was introduced to repair the country's flawed immigration system.

The spokesmen — including Southern Baptist David Uth, a Florida pastor — participated April 17 in the Evangelical Day of Prayer and Action for Immigration Reform. They addressed reporters outside the Capitol only hours after a bill crafted by a bipartisan group of eight senators was introduced.

During the day, about 300 evangelicals visited more than 60 congressional members' offices to urge them to pass broad immigration reform this year.

Many also participated in two worship services held at a nearby church before and after the Hill visits.

'Come alongside' leaders

Uth, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, said his role and that of other pastors and evangelical leaders is not to draft legislation but "to come alongside those who do; it's to encourage them; it's to pray for them."

First, Orlando, has at least 32 languages represented in its congregation, Uth said.

Eight language groups meet regularly on the weekend at the church, he said. About 1,000 Hispanics attend services at the church, which has about 16,000 members.

During the last 18 months, the members of First, Orlando, have become more aware of the needs of undocumented immigrants in their midst. In recent months, they have read a daily Bible verse for 40 days from the "I Was a Stranger Challenge" sponsored by



BP photo

SPEAKING UP — David Uth, pastor of FBC Orlando, Fla., talks about the need for comprehensive reform at an April 17 news conference on the U.S. Capitol lawn.

the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT).

"They realize now this issue has a name; it has a face; it has a story," Uth told reporters.

Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, told reporters the congregation's leaders had learned over time that about three-fourths of

the nearly 1,000 Spanish-speaking people worshipping at the church weekly are undocumented.

As leaders, they studied the Bible, finding it said to welcome warmly the strangers and immigrants and "serve them with Christ-like love."

"The Scriptures, however, teach as well that the laws of the land must be honored unless they are broken so badly that they must be fixed," Hybels said.

"I'm in Washington today with a deep conviction that our immigration system has been in a state of disrepair for far too long, leaving millions of people in an unsustainable state of limbo and fear.

"EIT, a coalition of evangelical leaders that supports broad immigration reform, has called for a solution that:

- ▶ "Respects the God-given dignity of every person;

- ▶ "Protects the unity of the immediate family;

- ▶ "Respects the rule of law,

- ▶ "Guarantees secure national borders,

- ▶ "Ensures fairness to taxpayers;

- ▶ "Establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents."

The EIT participants who spoke at the Capitol did not endorse the newly introduced Senate bill, especially since they had not had time to study it, but said they would judge it based on the coalition's statement of principles. Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, told reporters, "What we're saying is: Here are our commitments, and we want any legislation to reflect that." (BP)

Want to know God?

By Pastor Franklin Kirksey
First Baptist Church, Spanish Fort

The crux of Christianity is a call repeated throughout the Gospel of John. Christianity without discipleship is not genuine Christianity, according to the Bible. "Follow Me" is one of the central themes of Jesus' ministry recorded by John.

We see the invitation of discipleship. In John 1:43 we read, "The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me.'" Make certain that you have accepted Jesus' invitation to follow Him or you will have eternity to regret it.

We see the illumination of discipleship. From John 8:12 we read, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

We see the identification of discipleship. Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

We see the itemization of discipleship. Jesus sets down the particulars of being a disciple. We find another particular of discipleship in John 12:26, where Jesus says, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

We see the immigration of discipleship. John writes in John 13:36, "Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.'" Only genuine believers will immigrate to heaven, unbelievers will immigrate to hell. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." You will never get to heaven unless you follow Jesus.

We see the isolation of discipleship. In John 21:19 we read, "This He spoke, signifying by what death [Peter] would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'" Jesus calls us to follow Him individually.

Some are better disciples than others, but all genuine believers are disciples. Therefore, Jesus' call to "Follow Me" is the crux of Christianity.

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MINISTER OF MUSIC/ASSOCIATE PASTOR: Ozark Baptist Church is searching for a full-time minister of music/associate pastor. Please send your resume and preferably a DVD of leading worship: OBC Search Committee, 282 S. Union Ave, Ozark, AL 36360, or email: pastorsteve@ozarkbaptist.org. Visit us: ozarkbaptist.org.

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RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

by Jennifer Davis Rash • executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Sometimes it's the little things...

Two of my nieces had their first painful dental experiences recently — they both had a tooth pulled prior to entering the orthodontics world.

It was about a week prior to their tooth-pulling appointments when they shared with me how scared they were and how they didn't know what to expect. Of course, being the amazing aunt that I am, I knew my role was to help calm their fears. I started by sharing personal experiences and being honest that it wasn't always a pleasant experience but that it was bearable.

I offered suggestions to help with the anxiety such as listening to their iPods while the dental work was going on so the sounds of the drills and equipment wouldn't be so intimidating.

I also explained that I always close my eyes as soon as the dentist starts to work so I don't see the various instruments, especially the shot.

"The shot?" my nieces — in complete unison — asked with rapidly increasing high-pitched shrills. "No one told us we had to get a shot!"

Oops, guess Aunt Jen Jen went a little too far in her explanation. I don't think they heard another word I said after that, and I'm sure their parents were thrilled with my assistance in the matter.

I wonder if I reacted in a similar way when my mom shared the "close your eyes" trick with me more than 35 years ago. It's funny how clearly I remember sitting in the dentist's waiting room at 5 or 6 years old, shaking from fear. I don't recall what I

said, but I do remember vividly the calming voice of my mom com-

forting me and assuring me everything would be OK.

I took her advice that day and she was right. It worked, and it still works all these years later. The minute the dental chair is fully reclined and the process begins, I close my eyes and spend the time praying, thinking, planning, listening to music — anything but engaging in the activity swirling around me.

A simple act, yes, but one of countless tips and efforts of encouragement my mom has shared with me through the years — a lot of little things that have added up to make life better overall.

When I decided to focus this month's Rashional Thoughts on Mother's Day, I assumed I would select a turning point in my life in which my mom made a major impact and share those reflections. And while there are those highlight moments, I discovered the larger impact for me has been the consistency of my mom's presence, encouragement, strength and love.

She has an incredible intuition and sense of knowing what to do and where to be. She gives and gives and gives in so many ways and most of the time she manages to do it without a lot of fanfare.

I've not yet learned how to silently and seamlessly slip in, do what needs to be done and slip out. I'm still much too loud, but I love watching my mom do her thing. And I always smile when she manages to slip something over on me.

Her quiet demeanor and sweet nature could fool those who don't know her, but my mom's strength is solid. She is secure in her faith and follows the two greatest commandments — love Jesus and love others — wholeheartedly.

Her love for family extends beyond our immediate members. It reaches far and wide, even beyond bloodlines. I would venture to say there's not a sister, brother, cousin, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew who wouldn't agree.

Thank you, Mom, for consistently sharing tips to help me through life, and thank you for modeling a quiet, solid strength of faith, hope and love.



Rashional EXTRAS...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

A question for Christian believers:

How would Jesus look to the world if He were based on your life?

"We think we are physical beings who are also Christians ... who also have a spiritual life. ... That's not what God called us to be according to His word. ... We are spiritual beings who have a limited physical time on the planet ... who have been called to be a living, breathing, flesh and blood embodiment of the Lord Jesus Christ as we walk around on the planet and interface with the teeming masses. ... We are spiritual beings ... with powerful opportunities now. ... What if God loved you the way you love others?"

Terry Newberry
Bible study teacher
Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville
terrynewberry.com

In a sermon on the importance of simplicity and a reference to 2 Corinthians 11:3: "We have allowed the world to make us too busy, to seduce us not with great sins but with overloaded lives that have no room for a simple, sincere, pure devotion to Christ."

David Mitchell
Minister to students
FBC Rock Hill, S.C.

"How real are any of us if we do not share our dark days with those closest to us, if we do not claim our failures as well as our successes? Authenticity is not something you have; it is something you choose."

Susan Scott
"Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time"

Creating time? 10 simple ideas

By Teri Lynne Underwood
www.terilynneunderwood.com

Is your to-do list overwhelming?

Have you ever wished for just one more hour in the day? Or one more day in the week?

Do you wish you could create more time?

Yeah, me too. In fact, if we're honest, I'd imagine we all do. We cannot make our days last 25 hours, but we can find simple ways to use the time we have better. I'm no organizational expert. If you were to come visit my house right now, you'd see my dining room table piled high with all the "stuff" that didn't fit when we put our new furniture into the living room. ... But I am learning to slow down, to give my time to the things that really matter. And it feels really good.

10 tips for creating time

► Plan well. As the old saying goes, "If you don't plan your day, someone else will." Take control of your time. For a great tool to help you in this endeavor, I recommend "Tell Your Time: How to Manage Your Schedule So You Can Live Free" by Amy Andrews.

► "Catch up time." The truth is, I always have more tasks than time ... and I'm easily distracted. In an effort to diminish the effects of this character flaw, I build catch-up time into my day. Allocate an hour each day for catching up. Here's a hint, it's best not to make this the hour before you go to bed. You'll be too tired.

► Group like tasks. This is one of those tips that's given in every organization book out there ... because it works!!

► Establish your priorities for each day. I usually have about two or three priorities per day. Any more than that won't probably get done anyway so why set myself up for disappointment.

► Start well. Begin your day by asking God what His plan for these hours is.

► Make a list ... then mark off 10 percent.

► Give yourself some playtime. You are going to get on Pinterest or play Words with Friends. You enjoy it and it relaxes and even inspires you. Admit it ... and build it into your routine.

► Delegate. Here's something that just might shock you but pay close attention. You don't have to do it all! Someone else may do it differently but just enjoy that it's done.

► Delete. There are things you do (or feel guilty about not doing) that really don't matter.

► GO TO BED!! Want to create more time in your day ... get enough rest!! It's not rocket science, I know, but you will be more productive and feel better if you are well-rested.

So, there you have it ... my suggestions for creating time. Or maybe they are really just ideas for using the time you have better.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This blog post is an excerpt from Teri Lynne Underwood's "permission to live well" blog at www.terilynneunderwood.com. Underwood is a member of Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville, where her husband, Scott, serves as minister of music.

TIME FOR NEW PHOTO

It's time for an updated photo for Rashional Thoughts, but I need help deciding the style and pose. Email me your suggestions: jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

Family Matters

{ Prayer of Hope }

Josh was nine when he first came to live at Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. A few months after he arrived, he decided to accept God's love and forgiveness and to live his life the way God wants him to.

After Josh became a Christian, he started praying daily for his mother to become a Christian. One day he got a letter from her. In it, she told Josh how much she loved him and that she had become a Christian! She also asked him to forgive her for the things she had done that led to him coming to the Children's Homes.

Josh was so excited that he immediately began praying for his dad to become a Christian as well.

Another little boy, Adam, had also been talking with his foster parents about becoming a Christian. One of our social workers, Elise Vincent, had been working with him. Here is her story:

"It is no secret the life of a social worker can be stressful, emotionally draining, and frustrating. There are moments, though, that dwarf these emotions and remind me how God renews our strength at just the right moment. Adam had been exposed to so much trauma in his family and had spent all of his life in complete dysfunction with no healthy coping behaviors. I worked so hard with him. I made special trips to the foster family's home just to create consistency in his life. On one of my recent visits to the home, I barely got inside the door before he was waving a book in my face. He excitedly said, 'Mrs. Elise, I got saved last night! Look at my new Bible.' I shared in his excitement and then reminded him that I had come to take him to an appointment. As I drove, I glanced back at him in my rearview mirror. He held his new Bible as if it was the most precious possession he owned. He constantly opened it and read highlighted verses and smiled. The smile was undeniably the joy that only Jesus Christ can put in a child's heart. I think of this little boy every day and that joyful look on his face, and I thank the Lord He allowed me to share that moment with him. It encourages me on the hard days. I pray the Lord would put the right mentors in his life as he continues to grow spiritually. This is why my job is a ministry and why God has set up this wonderful organization. I am proud and honored to be a part of such a wonderful place that gives me the opportunity to experience these moments."

When you and your church partner with your Alabama Baptist Children's Homes, you create opportunities for our foster parents and house parents to nurture these little ones and to share with them the life-changing love of Christ.

Please, keep Josh, Adam and their families in your prayers. And encourage your church to join in the Annual Day of Prayer for the Children's Homes this Mother's Day, May 13.

Annual Day of Prayer

for the

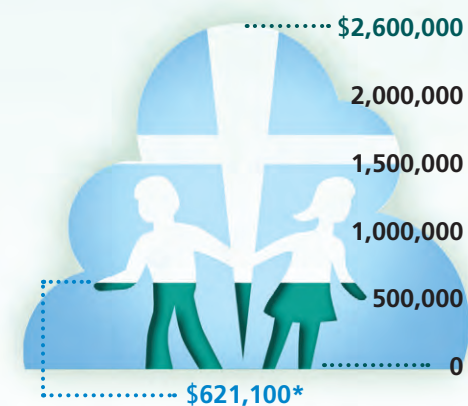
Children's Homes

Mother's Day, May 12

Thank you!

Churches gave \$2,783,913.59 directly to your Children's Homes to serve children and families in need last year. Thank you to all who gave through your church to exceed the 2012 offering goal!

2013 ANNUAL OFFERING



The 2013 goal for the Annual Children's Homes Offering is \$2.6 million. Please encourage your church to give.

* Graphic represents giving totals as of press time.



2013 Annual Offering Free Materials

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IMB photo

Chris Jenkins (right), senior pastor of Unity Baptist Church, Prince George, Va., has worked to build lasting relationships with members of the 'hidden people.' It was during a missions trip in October 2011 that Unity first met one of the people group's few known believers.



IMB photo



IMB photo

'Hidden people'

Muslim-turned-believer an answer to prayer in sub-Saharan desert

Late one night in the sub-Saharan desert, Ibrahim had an "epiphany." He felt God leading him to read John 14, which begins: "Your heart must not be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me." A Christian had given him the Bible in 1993. The son of an imam (teacher of Islam), Ibrahim had been struggling to reconcile the God of Scripture with what he had been taught — that it was blasphemous to call Jesus the "Son of God."

But the more he read, the more he questioned the faith he was raised to have. "The doubt grew in my life," he recalled. "I had no peace."

That night in the desert, he had prayed to God, "I would like you to reveal the truth (of who You are) to me."

He found the answer in John 14:6: "Jesus told him, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

Over the next few days, Ibrahim continued battling his doubts. "But the lack of peace was just becoming greater and greater in my heart," he recalled. By the end of the week, Ibrahim accepted Christ as his Savior. Immediately, the strife he had felt was replaced by joy.

Persecuted for faith

But that joy has been tested. Since becoming a believer 20 years ago, Ibrahim has faced persecution from family and friends. He is often lonely and discouraged.

Ibrahim is one of the few known believers in his predominantly Muslim people group of more than 100,000 known as the "hidden people." They live in a remote, conflict-ridden desert area dangerous to access and are one of more than 3,000 unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs) in the world with less than 2 percent evangelical Christians

and no active church-planting strategy.

In October 2011, Ibrahim met a team from Unity Baptist Church, Prince George, Va., who had been praying for his people group since 2009. They had started going on missions trips to sub-Saharan Africa to reach the people group with the gospel.

"It's a great encouragement," Ibrahim said, to have churches praying and partnering in this way. It made him feel like "part of a big family."

Unity's senior pastor Chris Jenkins said, "It was an honor to be able to sit there next to our one believer that we've been praying for for several years and to hear him so eloquently share his testimony and to share what God is doing with the people even before we've ever gotten involved, and seeing that we are just a part of a bigger team that God has been bringing together for some time now."

Rebecca Waters, a native Texan and a Christian worker in sub-Saharan Africa, helped connect Ibrahim with Unity. Unity, Waters and other Christians in the area are helping Ibrahim provide others with the Scripture that changed his life. Ibrahim is translating the Bible into two local languages, one of which is his people group's native tongue, and is working to record his translations into distributable audio files.

Ibrahim has been able to share his faith while checking the translation's comprehension. A few have come to know Christ, but Ibrahim calls them "secret believers," because they keep their faith clandestine to avoid persecution.

"I understand these people," Ibrahim said. "Who wants to be rejected by his family? Nobody. Rejection from his family is nothing easy. ... They need prayers from us."

When Unity first became involved in embracing the hidden people, security issues prevented the church from visiting the people group in the desert, but several families migrated to the cities where Unity and other believers could work with them.

Top photo: Ibrahim is one of the few known believers among the unengaged, unreached people group known as the 'hidden people' in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite persecution, he is serving God by translating the Bible into his people group's heart language. **Bottom photo:** Ibrahim was able to Skype with the congregation of Unity Baptist Church, Prince George, Va.

In recent months, however, turmoil in the hidden people's country has forced many from their remote desert homes to become refugees in other, more accessible regions. Though the unrest has caused tragedy, God has opened a door for Unity to more easily reach their people.

Technology has helped introduce Ibrahim to the Virginia congregation that has faithfully prayed for him and his people.

'Tangibly involved'

One Sunday morning Jenkins coordinated a Skype conversation between Ibrahim and the congregation. It not only encouraged Ibrahim but impacted Unity.

"[Skyping with Ibrahim] challenges these people," Jenkins said. "It motivates them and it lets them see that God's work is not just something that you write a check for at Christmastime; that it's not just something you get in a prayer letter once a month. But it is something that they are very much tangibly involved in."

Unity still keeps in good contact with Ibrahim through Skype conversations and continues to strive to reach their hidden people in any way they can — they are sending teams to connect with their people, raising funds to help those in the refugee camps, strategizing human needs projects and continuing to support Ibrahim in his Bible translation and distribution project.

"We are ecstatic with God's continued working among our hidden people," Jenkins said. "We are still learning our role as we continue to bring into a clearer focus of what this long journey to the cross for them is going to look like."

To learn how a church can embrace an unengaged, unreached people group, go to call2embrace.org.

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



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Islamist militants kill widow of slain Christian man

BELEDWEYNE, Somalia — Islamist militants in Somalia have killed the widow of a Christian who was slain for his faith in December 2012, leaving the couple's five children orphaned, sources said.

Islamic extremist Al Shabaab rebels shot 42-year-old Fartun Omar to death April 13 in Buulodbarde, 12 miles from Beledweyne, Somalia, according to Abdi Aziz Suleiman of Radio Shebelle in Beledweyne.

The extremists had been searching for her for several months, as they knew that she was a secret Christian like her late husband, Mursal Isse Siad, sources said.

Due to the threat of persecution, Omar on April 10 decided to leave the central Somali city by bus with another neighbor to seek refuge with relatives, the first neighbor said. On reaching Buulobarde, which is controlled by Al Shabaab, militants at a roadblock ordered passengers to disembark and questioned them one by one.

"Unfortunately, she was not cleared by the Al Shabaab," said the neighbor who accompanied her. "I only heard one of them saying, 'This is the woman whose husband was killed last year. Do not let her in.'"

"On April 13, I received news from Beledweyne that a woman in Buulobarde had been killed by the Al Shabaab," the neighbor said. "Soon I found out that it was Fartun Omar."

Sources said Omar was found dead on the outskirts of Buulobarde with bullet wounds to her right side.

Officials fine Baptists in Kazakhstan for meetings

AYAGOZ, Kazakhstan — Two grandmothers in their late seventies were among seven Baptists fined in early April for participating in an unregistered religious meeting in a private home in the town of Ayagoz in East Kazakhstan Region. Each was fined between one and two months' average wage for a local state employee.

The oldest of the fined Ayagoz Baptists is 77. However, another Baptist — former Soviet-era religious prisoner Yakov Skorniyakov — was 79 when he was given a massive fine for his religious activity in April 2006.

The seven fines bring to eight the number of members of the Council of Churches Baptist Church in Ayagoz fined in 2013. Another is awaiting trial. Members of the Council of Baptists have a policy of not seeking state registration, insisting that Kazakhstan's Constitution and the country's international human rights commitments cannot require communities to have registration before they can meet for worship. They also have a policy of not paying the many administrative fines handed down to their members across Kazakhstan.

After widespread outrage among believers and human rights defenders in Kazakhstan, an appeals court has cancelled the part of the lower court decision ordering that Bibles and other Christian literature confiscated from Baptist Vyacheslav Cherkasov should be destroyed. However, it left the fine unchanged.

Muslim extremists seize, torture convert from Islam

BULO MARER, Somalia — Muslim militants still controlling part of the Lower Shebelle Region of Somalia have jailed and tortured a Christian for converting from Islam, sources said.

Al Shabaab rebels seized Hassan Gulled, 25, on March 23 in Bullo Marer near Qoryoley District, they said. Gulled, who had fled to Kenya in 2007 in search of safety and a better life, had left Kenya on Feb. 27 to visit family in Somalia, sources said.

As Gulled was only visiting family in Somalia, his wife remained in an undisclosed city in Kenya. Al Shabaab extremists in Kenya who knew of his Christian activities there apparently contacted members of the militant group in Somalia, who monitored his movement for three weeks before seizing him, sources said.

"Four masked, armed militia from Al Shabaab took Gulled into a Land Cruiser and then drove away as family watched him helplessly," said one source.

Another source said it was confirmed that Gulled has been jailed in Bullo Marer. "The Al Shabaab have been torturing him to see whether he would deny his Christian faith," the source said. "[At press time,] no information has surfaced concerning Gulled. There is a possibility that he could have been killed."



Photo courtesy of Bill Barker

Lester McPeek (left) and his wife, Bessie, minister to new mothers in need in Kentucky using quilts made by quilters at First Baptist Church, Enterprise.

'A piece of thread, a piece of cloth'

Alabama Baptists use quilting to help needy in Appalachia

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Helen Harrison says she couldn't escape being a quilter.

Her mother and both grandmothers quilted, as did all of the aunts on her dad's side of the family.

Though Harrison put off getting started with the craft until she was a young adult, once she began she knew she had a lifelong hobby.

That's why when Harrison heard about a need for quilts and blankets in Appalachia, she felt sure she could do something to help.

"About three years ago at Shocco Springs (Conference Center), there was a missionary from West Virginia who told us about the severe need families in that area have," said Harrison, a member of First Baptist Church, Enterprise. "It's cold there, and many people don't have heat, so they were looking for ways to help keep those people warm. I thought it sounded like it would be a fun project."

Harrison said initially she didn't think much more about the endeavor, but then the same missionary, Bill Barker, came to speak at her church the following year, talking again about the need for blankets. Harrison thought she should get a group of women together from First, Enterprise, to make quilts.

'It took off from there'

"I got a call from Helen, who wanted to know if I could use some quilts," Barker said. "I shared with her that we needed quilts for babies, and she got back to me and said they would start making quilts as a group. It just took off from there."

At first, Harrison had about five women volunteer, and these days the group is up to eight participants. If the women don't know how to quilt, Harrison

gives them a lesson, and the women meet every Thursday afternoon from 1 to 4 p.m. in the church's basement.

Though they have sent dozens of quilts to families in need via Barker, Harrison said they have never heard anything from the recipients. However, they know each quilt is making a difference to the families who they are given to.

"This group has meant so much to Bill Barker's ministry," said Sonny Moore, pastor of First, Enterprise. "It is a blessing to our church and a challenge to our people that everyone can be used in the Lord's work."

One particular delivery that sticks in Barker's mind is a time when he had several quilts with him and was attending an event he'd been invited to in Appalachia where new mothers in need would be given supplies. When he arrived, one of the hosts mentioned that they had everything they needed except blankets.

"I asked, 'How many quilts do you need?' and she told me they needed 28," Barker said. "That was exactly the number of quilts I had with me. I remember that she started crying when I told her that."

Harrison and her fellow quilters enjoy hearing reports like this from Barker, and she said she wants the women and children who receive these quilts to know that the quilters love what they're doing and hope their labor of love will help keep families warm. The quilters attach a tag to each quilt they send that reads: "From the FBC Enterprise Quilters. May God bless you and your family."

"These ladies are involved in missions, and they never leave Enterprise, Alabama, yet they've touched lives in Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky," Barker said. "And they've done it with a needle, a piece of thread and a piece of cloth."

Finding CHRIST

Nets point guard Williams gives God glory for opportunities, skills

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

There was a time in Deron Williams' life when the ball wasn't bouncing his way.

"I saw that I wasn't living the right way. I wasn't on the path to heaven, and that is why we are here on

earth," said Williams, the premiere point guard for the Brooklyn Nets.

However, two spiritual decisions got him pointed in the right direction. After his salvation experience in 2009, Williams was baptized Jan. 24, 2010.

"People who have been around me for years definitely notice the changes in the way I act and the way I carry myself," Williams said. "People who didn't know that I was a Christian have commented and said things to me. I played better since I found the Lord. I think my focus was better; my mind was clear."

Clearly stats and awards confirm it. He has been a NBA All-Star three times (2010, 2011 and 2012). For the second time, he was an Olympic gold medal winner on Team USA at the London Summer Olympics in 2012 (the first being at the

2008 Beijing Summer Olympics).

This season, he is averaging 18.4 points, 3.1 rebounds and 7.7 assists. Brooklyn has already clinched an Eastern Conference playoff spot.

"The team goes as he goes," said Toronto Raptors small forward Rudy Gay. "He is one of the best point guards in the league and has been for a long time. He has been great."

First round draft

This is Williams' eighth season. He was the Utah Jazz's first round draft choice (third overall) in the 2005 NBA Draft. He was named to the NBA All-Rookie First Team for the 2005–06 season while averaging 10.8 points, and he sparked the Jazz to the Western Conference finals in 2007 and to the playoffs in 2008 and 2010 before being traded to the Nets in 2011.

At every place he has been, the team has been a championship contender. Born in Parkersburg, W.Va., Williams and his family moved to The Colony, Texas, a Dallas suburb. His Cougars team reached the 5A state semifinals both his junior and senior years.

Recruited by the University of Illinois, Williams played three years for the Fighting Illini, where he twice was first team All-Big Ten and in 2005 a consensus



Photo by Andy Lyons/NBAE

Deron Williams

All-American. He left after his junior season after leading Illinois to the NCAA national championship game, where the Illini lost to North Carolina.

"God has blessed me," said Williams, 28. "He has given me opportunities and skills. I have been able to make the most of them through hard work. God has just blessed."

Williams was baptized while playing for Utah. He and his wife, Amy, were members of Salt Lake Christian Church, a nondenominational church in Salt Lake City.

A commitment to read the Bible, pray and surround himself with other Christians has helped him grow spiritually.

"It's a crazy world we live in," he said. "Everywhere you look there is sin and temptation. You have to ignore it and stay focused on the Lord."

One of Williams' teammates at Utah was Kyle Korver, an evangelical Christian who is now a shooting guard with the Atlanta Hawks.

"We have a good relationship," Williams said. "He is a great brother in Christ."

Utah small forward/shooting guard Gordon Hayward was also a teammate of Williams. Hayward called Williams a leader offensively, defensively and spiritually.

"As far as what he brings through Christ, he connects the way he plays. He leads by example," Hayward said.

Williams has invited Nets forward Jerry Stackhouse to church with him in New York City.

"We are still growing. It's a great thing," said Stackhouse, who is a Christian. "The good thing about him is his faith is strong."

A friend of Williams, Gay has seen Williams' strong commitment to his family.

"He is a family man," Gay said. "Just being around him, he has always been a good person to me and a good person to talk to."

Williams said he enjoys being with his kids. "My family, they are my life."

Applying Scripture

Williams said he applies Romans 12:1–2 to his daily life. The verse reads, "Therefore I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will."

"It's been great to know the Lord better through reading the Bible and prayer," Williams said. "Anybody who is a Christian knows that it is tough. Every day is a struggle. It's something you have to work on like I do. I continue to be dedicated and focus on it. He is my Lord and Savior." 🙏

"It's been great to know the Lord better through reading the Bible and prayer. ... It's something you have to work on like I do. I continue to be dedicated and focus on it. He is my Lord and Savior."

Deron Williams
Brooklyn Nets