

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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10 real reasons pastors quit too soon



istockphoto.com

Pastors can take action to be sure they don't separate from their calling

By Tim Peters
www.saygeresources.com

More than 1,700 pastors leave the ministry every month.

This staggering number includes some of the brightest, most inspiring pastors in the country. To prevent the continued flight of our pastors, we need to understand the cause of the problem. Though every situation is unique, the reasons pastors leave are often similar.

Here are 10 common reasons pastors quit too soon.

1. Discouragement.

Fifty percent of pastors report feeling so discouraged they would leave the ministry if they could.

Complaints speak louder than compliments. You can receive 15 compliments and one complaint, and the complaint will stick. When you hear criticism and look out to see empty pews, it can be difficult to recognize the positive impact you're making. The key is to remember: No matter how much negative you hear, you're always doing 10 times more good.

2. Failure.

Seventy percent of pastors say they have a lower self-image now than when they started.

Many pastors have difficulty recognizing success. They compare themselves to other pastors and other ministries. Comparisons produce only two outcomes: (1) You think you're better, which results in excessive pride, or (2) you feel like you don't measure up, which creates a sense of failure. The key is not to compare but to celebrate your successes.

3. Loneliness.

Seventy percent of pastors do not have someone they consider a close friend.

With so many people looking to pastors for guidance, it can be difficult for pastors to let their guards down. They don't want to come across as less than perfect. They feel they can't be transparent and vulnerable. That creates a sense of isolation. It's important for pastors to find people they can open up and share their struggles with, instead of absorbing and isolating.

4. Moral Failure.

Thirty-three percent of pastors confess having been
(See 'Pray,' page 3)

Pastors need encouragement in their roles

I just don't think I can do this anymore."

Michael Wilson, program director for the Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence at Samford University in Birmingham, said he's talked with "more than a few" ministers who have said those words.

There's no single reason pastors leave the ministry, Wilson said. Usually it's a combination of factors.

"More often than not, however, the underlying cause is a growing sense of disillusionment, discouragement and disappointment related to ministry," he said. "If little or nothing happens to change this, the minister eventually comes to a crossroads."

Church people need to be aware that pastors need encouragement and the sense that they are "making a difference for good," Wilson said.

Dale Huff said he agrees, but he's not sure it's as widespread a problem in Alabama as some broad information may seem to indicate.

'Discouragement'

"I agree with the discouragement, failure, loneliness, financial pressure, burnout, health, marriage and family reasons, although I question the percentages," said Huff, director of the office of Leadership and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The United States has about 350,000 churches and more than 400,000 ministers, Huff said. "If more than 1,700 leave a month, 20,000 a year, that is a 5 percent rate. That rate may be similar in many or most vocations or professions."

Still, many pastors are significantly overworked because they work another full-time job, he said. "The fact that 90 percent of pastors ... work 55-75 hours a week could be due to the fact that a majority of churches are bivocational, which means pastoring is their second job." (TAB)

When
pastors and churches
don't fit

See pages 4-5



COMMENT

The Importance of Calling a Pastor

The most important decision a church congregation makes is who to call as pastor. That is the conclusion of many scholars who study the life of the church. Much of the church's future will flow from the relationship of the church and its pastor. Studies found that after about seven years, a church begins to reflect the values, goals and vision of its pastor.

A study by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor Bill Day concluded, "The length of a pastor's tenure was found to have a direct correlation on the health of a church. A church's likelihood to be healthy was much greater when the pastor had served there between five and 20 years."

A study by Ellison Research reported, "Any study of the church landscape reveals that the vast majority of extremely strong and often large churches have or had a pastoral tenure of more than 15 years. In fact, the best years of service take place between five and 14 years."

In an article titled "Pastoral Longevity and Church Growth," Charles Arn reported that approximately three-fourths of growing churches were being led by pastors who had been in their church more than four years while two-thirds of declining churches were being led by pastors who had been in their church less than four years.

Arn added, "Frequent change of pastors seems to negate all the other complicated ingredients that go into a church's growth mix."

Still another report declared, "Rapid pastoral turnover greatly contributes to the instability, lack of growth and the demise of a local church. Still pastors continue to move far too quickly."

Despite knowing the advantages of continuity in pastoral leadership, the average tenure of a Baptist pastor is 3.6 years (42 months) according to Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources. A survey of Protestant denominations found the average pastor stays 54 months or 4.5 years. Barna Research places the average tenure between four and five years.

One observer looked at these numbers and con-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

cluded, "That's just not long enough to make a difference beyond marrying and burying people."

If churches and pastors know the advantages of longer pastoral tenure and the dangers of shorter pastoral tenure, then why does this pattern continue?

Part of the reason is lack of a common vision between pastor and people.

'Job frustration'

In one study, about two-thirds of pastors who had resigned their churches responded to a survey and indicated that problems between them and the churches they served played a part in the resignations. It was expressed in phrases like "desire to serve a different community," "job frustration" and "wanting a different size church." Ten percent of the respondents said they were asked to leave or were fired.

In a report titled, "10 Common Reasons Pastors Quit Too Soon," discouragement and failure were the top two reasons cited.

Rainer was more specific. Four of the top five reasons he lists are: 1. Frustration over critics in the church; 2. Frustration over the direction of the church; 3. Burn out; and 4. Forced termination other than moral failure.

Improving the relationship between the pastor and the church begins before a pastor is ever called. A church must know what it is looking for in a pastor if trouble is to be avoided and ten-

ure increased. That does not mean surveying the church to determine preferred age, education and desired experience in the next pastor. It means knowing what values the pastor should have to be compatible with the congregation and community. It means determining what leadership qualities are needed to do the ministry priorities of the church. It means agreeing on what the church wants to be and what its vision is. Determining such things is difficult but necessary.

Not every pastor can serve every church. That is not an indictment of a pastor or a church. It simply recognizes that certain churches require one skill set while other churches require a different skill set.

Knowing what skills are needed to successfully lead a particular congregation is the only way of determining if the prospective pastor possesses those skills that increase the probability of successful pastoral leadership.

No one buys a house by looking at the outside or taking a quick walk-through of the main floor. Buyers carefully examine a house from foundation to roof. Frequently an expert will be hired to examine everything from electrical wiring to plumbing to heating and cooling.

Likewise, no pastor should be called without a thorough examination of background, ministry skills, past experiences and all the rest.

Leadership style, worship preferences, theological commitments, ministry goals, strengths, weaknesses — such things seldom change from place to place. They reflect the vision and values of the prospective pastor, and those must be compatible with the vision and values of the calling church to avoid conflict.

Churches should insist that a pastor be able to lead by vision and not by personality. Church members can commit to vision. Vision can empower dedication and hard work. Vision remains when personalities change.

A leader whose primary strength is personality often attracts people with his warmth and charisma. But when the pastor leaves, so do the people. Such a pastor was never about building a church. Instead, he built a personal following.

A pastor must have substance, not just show, as well. A church cannot afford to be distracted by charisma and learn too late that the person called does not wear well over time.

For congregations to be stronger, healthier places where people come to know God through faith in Jesus Christ and then grow in their Christian discipleship, the relationships between pastor and people must improve. For that improvement to happen, churches have to be more careful and more serious in the calling process.

Recognizing the importance of a common vision between pastor and people is a good place to start to avoid conflict and improve relationships.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

ARTICLE SELECTION

I get *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper and am very disappointed in it. Using my most recent issue as an example; there was a full page about work in China, a full page about work with the Muslims, a full page on Tim Tebow and a full page about some basketball player. What I did not find in this issue or most issues was anything about what Baptists are doing for the Lord in Alabama. This is the "Alabama Baptist" isn't it? Surely

somewhere in this state God's work is being done. Why not write about that?
David Holmes
Piedmont, Ala.

BAPTISTS AT BEESON

I read with interest the article of May 2, 2013, concerning the 25th anniversary of Samford's Beeson Divinity School. As a graduate of Samford I was very much aware of the requirement Mr. Beeson put on Samford to receive the money for the divinity

school. It had to be interdenominational, a requirement that we as a convention never voted on. I have had a problem with the idea of professors from other faiths teaching our Baptist pastors.

Twice in your article the statement was made that the school is interdenominational. So I was curious as (See 'Letters,' page 10)





"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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pastors report a significant
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**pastors
separate
from their**

**passion
for
ministry**

Each year, 4,000 new
churches begin and 7,000
churches close.

Source: www.saygeresources.com; sxc.hu

Pray, ask God where you are struggling, what to address

(continued from page 1)

involved in inappropriate sexual behavior.

The moral failures of pastors are magnified more than the average person. The key to avoiding moral failures is creating a system of risk prevention. When you meet with someone of the opposite sex, let your spouse know, never meet behind closed doors and do not discuss relationship issues. For pornography, software is available to monitor or block Web activity.

5. Financial Pressure.

Seventy percent of pastors feel grossly underpaid.

Most ministries are nonprofits so pastors are not compensated well. When you can't fully provide the life you want for your family, it makes it hard to continue. Then you look at friends not in the ministry with big houses and nice cars. Pastors can relieve the pressure with better financial planning. Try following the 80-10-10 rule — 10 percent to church, 10 percent to savings and 80 percent to live off.

6. Anger.

Each year, 4,000 new churches begin and 7,000 churches close.

When things aren't going well, pastors become angry — with others, themselves or God. Thoughts fall along these lines: "I did everything you told me. I went to seminary. I started a ministry. Why are you not doing what you said?" The worst thing about anger is it spreads like wildfire. The medicine for anger is forgiveness. We have to forgive so we can move forward.

7. Burnout.

Ninety percent of pastors report working between 55 and 75 hours per week.

Pastors are put on a treadmill. They go from the ministry to a hospital visit to writing a sermon to meeting with congregation members. They just keep running until there's no passion

or energy left. They become exhausted and depleted. Vacations and sabbaticals can provide perspective. Another key is empowering other leaders so all the weight is not on the pastor's shoulders.

8. Physical Health.

Seventy-five percent of pastors report a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.

Many pastors overwork themselves and simply do not care for their bodies. When you're busy, it's easy to eat poorly. But eating the right foods is essential to physical health. It's the difference between fueling the body and depleting the body. Pastors also don't get enough rest or regular exercise. Exercise makes a huge difference in physical and mental health.

9. Marriage/Family Problems.

Eighty percent of pastors believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.

Too often, a pastor's spouse and children end up taking a backseat to the ministry. The key is balance. Marriage has to be a top priority. Your relationship with your spouse is the most important relationship you have on this Earth. You have to nurture your family relationships — whether that means having family night or seeking counseling.

10. Too Busy/Driven.

Ninety percent of pastors feel they are

inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.

A lot of pastors simply are not working efficiently. They are not protecting their calendars or giving themselves the space they need.

They haven't learned how to say "no." Being busy is not always being productive. Pastors need to find ways to maximize the use of their time. You have to learn how to say "no" at the right times.

Take a look at these 10 points, then pray and ask God: What area do I really need to address? Where am I struggling? Once you identify the areas where you need to improve, take these three steps:

► Ask for help. If you're struggling, there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking someone for help.

► Institute accountability. Find a group or person to keep you accountable in the areas you think you are weak.

► Take ownership of your choices. More than anyone else, you control the path you walk.

Take actions and precautions to make sure you don't let any of these 10 reasons separate you from your passion for the ministry and your calling.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Tim Peters is the creator of www.saygeresources.com, a monthly church marketing and communications training program. 🙏

**Eighty percent of pastors believe
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When pastors and churches don't FIT



A mismatch “puts you in a position to wholeheartedly trust the Lord and trust He is going to guide you through. ... Know there will be better days ahead.”

Pastor Michael

How to avoid, deal with issue of pastor, church not connecting with each other

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Pastor John was angry. He was hurt. “I felt like I had been sucker punched,” he said. But he had not always felt that way. In fact, Pastor John was initially excited when he was named pastor of the church.

“It was going to be something different for me and, I thought, something that would probably match my personality well and my gifts and my calling,” he shared.

But once settled into his new role, Pastor John had an uneasy feeling that he just wasn’t connecting with the church. “It was like they were keeping me at arms length,” he said.

Further uneasiness crept in as he began to realize the problem was about more than just “making connections” — some in the church weren’t happy with directions the church was taking and began to transfer those feelings onto the staff, he said.

Pastor John had reached a painful realization: the church was not what had been initially portrayed. He had found himself in a mismatch.

In retrospect, Pastor John doesn’t believe his pastor search committee intentionally misled him. “They really thought they were painting an accurate picture of the church,” he said.

Like Pastor John, Pastor Michael also experienced a wide range of emotions after a church mismatch. “In a huge sense I felt hurt and violated,” Pastor Michael said of his situation, yet added that he also felt “rescued” from his particular circumstance.

Pastor Michael served at the church during a period of decline in financial giving and attendance, as well as a time of discord among some staff members, he said.

“I was under [the] implication [that the] staff was united,” he noted. “That was not the case.”

Looking back, Pastor Michael wishes he had known more about the church — like the relationships among staff members and the parameters of the pastor’s authority and leadership — before entering what ultimate-

ly resulted in the mismatch.

David, a layperson, has served on more than one pastor search committee. During a particular committee term his church experienced a mismatch with the pastor that “came out of left field.” “We thought we had done everything,” David noted of his committee’s diligence.

While the factors that resulted in each of these mismatches varied for Pastor John, Pastor Michael and David, there are lessons and personal advice they would each offer to both churches and pastors on ways to handle and even potentially prevent mismatches from occurring.

From the pastor search committee standpoint, David stressed it’s vital for a committee to listen to its church and understand on the front end what they are looking for in a pastor.

“If a church ... seeks to be all-inclusive on their committee structure, a lot of times you make the mistake of selecting committee members who ... don’t fully comprehend where the church is, where it’s going, what its vision [and] mission [are],” he said.

David also believes churches that remain unresolved on elements such as worship style, preaching style and meeting times sometimes make the mistake of expecting the new pastor to resolve those types of issues.

“If your committee doesn’t have some assurance that leadership is working on ... or has already

solved those [types of] issues, then you can’t expect to call a pastor to come in and resolve (them),” David explained. “He’s in a situation that he can’t overcome a lot of times. And they’re not his issues, but he’s going to be asked to come in and resolve them, and that’s not fair to him.”

‘Training ground’

Another potential mistake a church can make is viewing the pastor search committee as a “training ground” for a church leader. “You don’t put people in and say, ‘This will be a good experience.’ You’ve got to have committed, dedicated Christians (who) know your people, know your church and are familiar with it,” David said.

Constant prayer and building trust among the committee members are also important elements of a successful pastor search committee, he added. “The ultimate goal is [that] when you come to the church with a

“Remember you’re dealing with people. These are families, and it affects the whole family.”

Pastor John

recommendation, you want it to be unanimous.”

While Pastor John recognizes that every mismatch situation is different, the way he sees it, the best way for churches and pastors to avoid a potential mismatch is if the search committee and its candidate “could come to the table” in complete honesty with each other.

Pastor Michael also acknowledged the importance of honesty. “Just be honest with your pastor when you’re calling [him],” he said. “Don’t go into it with hidden expectations.”

And if a church and pastor ultimately do end up in a mismatch, it’s “going to take a lot of wise counsel,” David said.

Pastor John would advise a fellow pastor going through a mismatch to draw as close to God as he’s ever been in his life and listen. “Seek a lot of good advice — pull your friends closer to you than they’ve ever been, but be careful in how you listen to them ... that you don’t let them, (while) well-meaning, sidetrack you from trying to follow what the Lord wants you to do,” he added.

A mismatch “puts you in a position to wholeheartedly trust the Lord and trust He is going to guide you through,” Pastor Michael said. “Trust that God knows best and that He will protect you. Realize it’s not a quick process but God will bring healing. Know there will be better days ahead.”

Addressing conflict

Pastors are just like anyone else in that they don’t enjoy conflict, David noted, but “if you reach a point where it has to be addressed, do it in a very Christian, professional way — don’t do it in a public manner.”

If a mismatch reaches a point beyond one or two key leaders in the church talking with the pastor, David suggested seeking professional help through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) office of LeaderCare and church administration (see story, this page). “You have someone who can come in and sit down and help you mediate a process,” he said of the SBOM resource. “What you want is to try to resolve any issues.”

David also noted the importance of the pastor’s family and said that when a church initially calls its pastor, it calls his family as well. He encouraged pastor search committees to talk with the pastor’s wife in that process. The meeting may entail nothing more than having a cup of coffee with the couple or taking them out to dinner, he said.

David noted other steps that can be taken to help the couple, particularly if they are new to the area. These include introducing them to the local school system if they have children and helping to familiarize them with other aspects of the community, such as the medical facilities.

Pastor John and Pastor Michael, like many pastors who have been through a mismatch, didn’t go through the experience alone — their families traveled the difficult journey with them.

“Remember you’re dealing with people,” Pastor John would tell churches. “These are families, and it affects the whole family.”

Traveling down the road of a mismatch is definitely a process, he reflected. “But the neat thing is what happened since then. ... From that day forward it’s been watching how God has worked and how we (my family) have allowed Him to work in our lives.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — The situations in this article took place in Alabama Baptist churches, but the names have been changed. ☛

A mismatch situation

Tools to sidestep or go forward from a dysfunctional relationship

By Joseph Rhea
The Alabama Baptist

In his 28 years as director of missions for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, Jerry Wilkins said he saw more than 50 forced pastoral resignations that could have been prevented.

The problem? A mismatch.

A mismatch is a circumstance where a pastor and a church have differences in either their doctrinal beliefs or their preferences for church practice. Areas for a possible mismatch include: views on the authority of Scripture; the relative importance of different pastoral tasks (teaching, shepherding, administration, etc.); the importance of missions; pastor-led vs. deacon-led church structure; and style of worship, to name a few.

Possible outcomes

A mismatch situation can lead to three possible outcomes:

1. The parties concerned may simply agree to disagree, in the spirit of Romans 14, and remain in fellowship.
2. They may take the uncomfortable but necessary steps to come to an agreement.
3. They may need to sever the relationship altogether.

The first key to understanding how to handle a mismatch is to understand how serious it is, said Dale Huff, director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“Stylistic differences or differences of pastoral authority can be overcome,” Huff said.

That means a church and pastor can have different preferences regarding worship style and can work toward agreement on who has the final say in a church’s decision making.

However, “doctrinal or moral issues are non-negotiables and pretty much

insurmountable,” Huff said.

Tom Fuller, director of ministry leadership development at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University, Birmingham, and a former Southern Baptist pastor, agreed.

“Differing doctrinal convictions, particularly ... core doctrines of the faith,” are mismatches that cannot be overcome, he said.

How can churches and pastors best deal with a potential mismatch?

Wilkins thinks the best way is to identify it on the front end.

“The best thing is to have committees and ministers ask the right questions to see if there’s a fit,” he said.

It is important for a pastor search committee to know its stances on doctrinal matters and to ask specific questions of potential candidates. Asking candidates about the Baptist Faith and Message, their views on predestination, the importance of missions and the inspiration of the Bible can help churches see if a potential pastor would be a good fit.

Huff affirmed the need for a pastor search committee to be in tune with the church’s needs and expectations. If a search committee is ignorant of the church’s needs or presumes to “decide what direction the church should take,” it risks creating a mismatch situation that will be harmful in the future, he said.

Clear, front-end communication from both parties can prevent an unhealthy mismatch. But what happens if a church and pastor find themselves already in a mismatch situation?

Again, communication is key.

“Communicate openly first about the differences,” Wilkins admonished, also saying that sweeping differences under the rug leads them to fester.

If a mismatch is noticed and people “just grumble about it,” Huff added, it creates a toxic attitude toward the pastor.

The pastor search committee or the deacon board can be an ideal group to bring awareness of a mismatch to the pastor’s attention, Huff said. Their familiarity with the

pastor and their presence in the church make them natural ambassadors.

After identifying the mismatch, church and pastor should decide if they can move forward toward agreement or not. “Compromise and tolerance” are best if they are possible, Wilkins said.

Fuller also believes that most issues beyond core doctrinal beliefs can be worked out.

“Being part of a church is a covenant relationship ... in many respects like a marriage relationship,” he said.

A covenant involves vows of unity and loyalty, and a church-pastor relationship should ideally be characterized by that same kind of commitment, he said.

Using the example of how Paul encouraged Jewish and Gentile Christians to remain in fellowship in Romans 14, Fuller advised churches and pastors to seek unity in Christ while still hanging on to their own convictions. Both sides ought to reach out in love and forgiveness.

If a church and pastor decide a mismatch situation cannot be overcome, Wilkins said the best thing a church can do for the pastor and for itself is to exercise patience.

If the church gives the pastor a several-month period in which to search for a new job and shows him support, the break will be far less traumatic than a sudden one would be.

Mixed feelings

“If anyone’s been there a length of time, there will be people who love that minister and would be unhappy if he left under pressure,” Wilkins said.

But whatever a church and pastor decide about their mismatch, Fuller said responding to it in a spirit of openness and love is the best way to meet it. “Whatever the nature of the mismatch may be, the most fatal thing is when we fail to love one another in that Christlike way,” he said. ☛

“Whatever the nature of the mismatch may be, the most fatal thing is when we fail to love one another in that Christlike way.”

Tom Fuller

director of ministry leadership development, Beeson Divinity School

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.

BIBB

► **Six Mile Church** will celebrate homecoming June 2. The Heartmen Quartet will sing. The worship service will be at 11 a.m. and lunch will follow at noon. A singing will be at 1 p.m. Everyone is invited. For information call Daniel Parsons at 205-225-0234. Bob Hope is pastor.

BIGBEE

► **Siloam Church, York**, will celebrate its 175th anniversary with homecoming May 19. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. and the service will be at 10:30 a.m. Rick Lance will speak and lunch will follow. Brad Campbell is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **East Gardendale Church, Gardendale**, will hold the "Fishers of Souls" fish fry May 18, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Bring lawn chairs. Pets not allowed. There will be a car show,

inflatables, food, music and fun. For information call 205-608-0889. Allen Davis is pastor. ► **The Old Paths gospel group** will perform at **Eastside Church, Birmingham**, on June 1, 6 p.m. Mark Smith is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Church, Holy Pond**, will hold a third Sunday night singing May 19, 6 p.m. with Sonlife Quartet from Chattanooga. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **West Highland Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 73rd homecoming June 2. Services begin at 10:30 a.m. Leroy Cole will speak and Jane Graddy will lead music accompanied by Sue Reeves. A fellowship meal will follow at noon. Larry Stewart is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Skyland Boulevard Church, Tuscaloosa**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary June 2, 10 a.m. For information or to RSVP, call 205-553-7412. Jimmy Garner is pastor. ► **Woodland Park Church, Tuscaloosa**, will collect donations for veterans of the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center on May 18, 8 a.m.–2 p.m. Accepted donations include clothing (all sizes of men's and women's new socks, undershirts, etc.); hygiene products (travel size toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, etc.) and gallon size plastic bags to assemble the packages. For information call 334-590-6207. Kramer Mize is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Chapel Hill Church, Millry**, will hold homecoming May 19 beginning at 10 a.m. Ferrell Mills is pastor.

SCWC seeks to inform, inspire writers

With a purpose to inform and inspire writers, the 2013 Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) will be held at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, June 7–8.

Featured keynote speakers will be Bruce Barbour and Angela Hunt. Barbour co-founded Barbour and Company, which today is a leading Christian publisher. His keynote address will be "Do You Need a Publisher To Be a Published Author?" Hunt, whose keynote address will be "Secrets To Being a Successful Writer," is

an award-winning Christian author.

Barbour and Hunt also will conduct instructional workshop sessions along with 15 other editors, publishers and writers who will serve as SCWC speakers. Additional speakers include Staci Brown Brooks, director of Birmingham local news for al.com, and Julie Gwinn, fiction editor at B&H Publishing Group.

Workshop registration begins June 7 at 11 a.m. in the First, Tuscaloosa, education building, with sessions following from 1–9

p.m. Registration June 8 begins at 8 a.m. with sessions from 8:45 a.m.–4 p.m. Session topics include "Working with an Agent," "How to Get Your First Novel Published" and "The Do's and Don'ts of Self-Publishing."

SCWC is one of the largest writing seminars in the nation, and this upcoming conference will be the 22nd since its founding. For more information, visit www.scwconference.com, email scwcworkshop@bellsouth.net or call 205-333-8603. Pre-registration ends June 1. (TAB)



TTU photo

KILLIAN NAMED TENNESSEE TEMPLE'S ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, was named alumnus of the year at Tennessee Temple University (TTU). "His ministry in the local church epitomizes a model that TTU students should follow," TTU President Steve Echols said.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Hambright retires after 40 years in ministry

After 40 years in ministry, John M. Hambright retired from his pastoral role at Enon Baptist Church, Morris, in early 2013.

Hambright served two years with the U.S. Army in Germany during the Vietnam War and became a Christian after returning home in 1968. He was ordained at First Baptist Church, Sayre, later serving in his first pastoral role at First Baptist Church, Hayden.

He earned a bachelor's degree in pastoral theology from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham in 1978; a master of divinity in 1986 and a doctor of ministry in 1991, both from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga.

He also served as pastor of North Gardendale Baptist Church, Gardendale; Trussville Southside Baptist Church; and Bluff Park Baptist Church. He served in other ministerial roles at First Baptist Church, Guin; First Baptist Church, Dora; and First Baptist Church, DeArmanville.

During his 10 and a half years of service at Enon Baptist, the church membership grew from 658 to more than 1,300, growth that Hambright attributes to "spiritual growth" and "loving people."

"We started using outreach through Sunday School and instilling ... that the Great Commission was for every person and that every person should be a person of outreach and ministry," Hambright said.

"[Enon Baptist members] loved ministry and the work of the Lord and their pastor. They made it very easy (to serve there)," Hambright said.

Two building projects were completed while Hambright was at Enon, including a worship center and a children's ministry building.

But Hambright has done more than just lead churches in the United States in his years of serving. He also has a passion for international missions and has volunteered in countries in Africa as well as France, Jamaica, Israel, Jordan, Italy and Guatemala, where Enon eventually planted a sister church in 2011.

He served on the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions executive director search committee, the state resolutions committee and the board of regents for the University of Mobile.

He was moderator of North Jefferson Baptist Association; director of Youth Praising Camp Ministry (a local youth camping outreach); Pastor's Conference program chairman; adjunct professor at Luther Rice Seminary; and doctor of ministry supervisor at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Linda, have two children.

In his retirement, Hambright plans to serve as a supply preacher "whenever the opportunity arises." He can be reached at 205-531-9142. (Neisha Fuson)

Hartford Baptist helps Geneva County flood victims

When rains pound the state as they have lately, some areas in Alabama are more likely to have problems.

Geneva County is one of them.

"There are some river issues ... and low-lying areas with flooding problems," said Chris Kroll, senior pastor of Hartford Baptist Church.

For weeks, the county has been working to rebuild roads. Major flooding in February brought 29 road closures and 91 sites with damage, according to the *Dothan Eagle*.

It was relatively minor in comparison to a March 2009 flood that swept the county — some roads still haven't been fully repaired from that flood, according to the *Dothan Eagle*.

But it still left people in need.

"Water from two directions converges there, and it can't run off," said Bruce Spivey, associate pastor of music and adults at Hartford Baptist, according to the *Dothan Eagle*. "I don't think it matters what the city does. If we get 8 inches of rain, it's going to happen."

It's something Kroll said doesn't happen often, but when it does, his church is working to be as prepared as they can to respond.

In February, Hartford Baptist opened its doors as an emergency shelter and housed people for one night until it was safe enough for them to go back to their homes.

"We have a gym that is Red Cross compliant," Kroll noted, adding that they were working to get first-responder aid in place for flood victims in the area when needed. (Grace Thornton)



Photo by Wray Dillard

More than 500 people attend Highland Baptist Church Broadway Fellowship's community party April 13 where more than 175 volunteers help make the event possible.



Photos by Wray Dillard

Top photo: Volunteers serve free food to community party attendees at Highland Baptist Church Broadway Fellowship, Florence. **Bottom photo:** T.I.M.E. Ministries share a gospel message through puppets at the community party.

'A marvelous plan'

Florence's Highland, Broadway Baptist churches merge, set for growth

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

More than 70 percent of Southern Baptist churches in the United States are plateaued or declining in membership. The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) suggests one way to help reverse these statistics is through a church revitalization strategy — a way to equip hurting churches with tools to infuse new life into their church and return a focus to the church's mission.

Because revitalization can be sought out in several ways, the SBOM assigns a trained coach to churches seeking help. For one year the coach serves to identify specific areas needing improvement, helps choose a strategic revitalization plan and assists in the implementation of that plan — such as improved music ministry, effective senior adult ministry or theologically sound Sunday School ministry.

Church revitalization also can be a way for healthy, growing churches to do missions in their local area. That type of ministry was something Highland Baptist Church, Florence, wanted to be a part of. In its case the ministry took the form of a church merger.

What it didn't expect was to merge with a "long-lost friend."

The story's start goes back to 1947 when Highland Baptist planted a mission church just minutes away from its own building. The plant, Weedon Heights Baptist

Church, became its own self-sustaining church in 1948, later changing its name to Broadway Baptist Church in the 1990s.

After more than 60 years and several shifts in leadership and community demographics, members of Broadway Baptist found themselves in a tight spot. They were without a pastor, shrinking in size, in a deteriorating building and seemingly unable to reach their neighbors with the gospel. But they were not going to give up without a fight and felt God leading them to seek help.

In the fall of 2012, Broadway's leadership contacted Eddy Garner, director of missions for Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association, and Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the SBOM, to ask for help. The church became part of the SBOM's church revitalization strategy with Gilbreath as its coach.

Around that same time period, John Brock, pastor of Highland Baptist, also had contacted Garner to share the church's vision and prayer to reach the community in a new way. He found his answer.

Broadway was in need and Highland was poised and ready to help.

"God was bringing it all together in the details," Garner said.

Planning and voting meetings ensued between Gilbreath, Brock, Garner and Broadway and Highland members. All parties agreed merging the two churches

was "a marvelous plan (to revitalize Broadway and reach the community)," Gilbreath said.

Highland members began working in February on Broadway's building to redo the sanctuary and install new carpet and windows. Volunteers from both churches also renovated the first floor of the educational space that includes the fellowship hall and Sunday School classes. One

large room on the third floor also was renovated to house the children's ministry.

By April 1, the two churches were a legal merger — one church, two campuses — and Broadway then became Highland Baptist Church Broadway Fellowship (HBCBF).

In an effort to introduce itself and get to know its neighbors as HBCBF, the church held what it called a "community party."

More than 175 volunteers from HBCBF; Lacey Springs Baptist Church, Florence; and T.I.M.E. (Training In Mission Evangelism) Ministries served at the April 13 event.

T.I.M.E. Ministries shared a gospel presentation with more than 500 attendees and 37 people indicated they prayed to receive Christ.

New life

Garner believes the church merger has "brought new life to (the former) Broadway" and "invigorated Highland Baptist Church."

He encourages smaller churches not to be afraid to ask for help and for larger churches to "not be so focused on themselves" but to look for ways to help other churches in their area.

Highland's merger and outreach is "a good reminder that missions and ministry begins right here in our community."

Churches interested in a church merger or church revitalization should contact Dale Huff, director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration of the SBOM, at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 263.

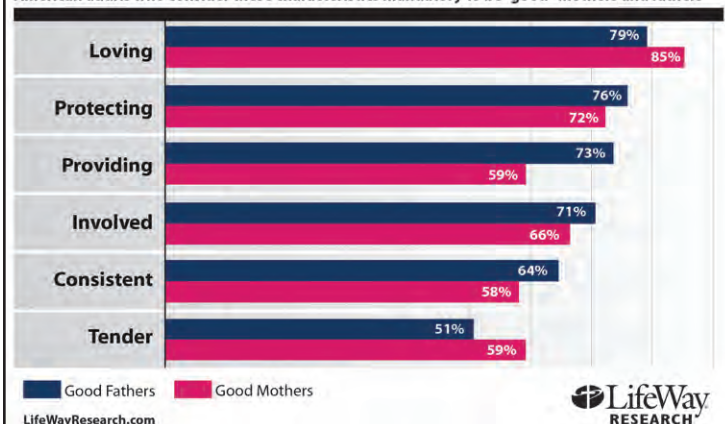
The Church Growth and Revitalization Conference hosted by the SBOM will be held at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, with Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., on May 21 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit www.alsbom.org/upcoming-events/church-revitalization-conference or call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258 for more information. ☞

**"God was bringing
it all together in
the details."**

**Eddy Garner
director of missions for
Colbert-Lauderdale
Baptist Association**

Top differences in parental characteristics

American adults who consider these characteristics mandatory to be "good" mothers and fathers



Role of a parent

'Loving' top favored parental trait; 'religious' not valued as much

What would you list as the mandatory traits for mothers and fathers?

"Loving" topped the charts in a recent LifeWay Research survey — 85 percent for mothers and 79 percent for fathers — but religious convictions did not carry much weight.

The survey was conducted in March to gauge opinions of the expected roles of parents at a time when Americans typically begin giving thoughts toward Mother's Day and Father's Day.

List of characteristics

Those surveyed were asked to select from the following list of characteristics:

Loving, Supporting, Protecting, Encouraging, Understanding, Involved, Trusting, Teaching, Tender, Providing, Consistent, Fun, Admitting Mistakes, Generous, Religious, Committed Christian.

Following the No. 1 "loving" characteristic, "supporting," "protecting," "encouraging" and "involved" showed up near the top in both lists.

Being religious (mothers, 35

percent, and fathers, 31 percent) or being a committed Christian (26 percent for both) came in much lower, however.

"Clearly Americans who are not Christians themselves would not be expected to value a Christian commitment among parents today," said Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research. "However, three out of four Americans indicate their religious preference is Christian, Catholic or Protestant. This means only a third of these people appear to value parents modeling a commitment to Jesus Christ to their children.

"For many who indicate a Christian-type religion, this preference simply reflects something they were born with rather than something they feel they must nurture in the next generation," McConnell explained.

LifeWay Research conducted the online survey of 1,054 adult Americans on March 25, among a sample of an online panel representing the adult population of the United States.

To read the full survey, visit www.lifeway.com/Article/research-religious-convictions-not-among-most-desired-parent-traits. (LifeWay)

"For many who indicate a Christian-type religion, this preference simply reflects something they were born with rather than something they feel they must nurture in the next generation."

Scott McConnell
director, LifeWay Research

Award-winning

For the 17th consecutive year, *The Alabama Baptist* has been named among the top regional Christian newspapers in the nation. Below is a list of awards won by *The Alabama Baptist* and other state Baptist entities based on work published in 2012.

The Alabama Baptist

- **Overall newspaper** — best in class — award of merit (ACP), award of merit (EPA)
- **April 27 Commemorative Issue** — best of class (RCC); newspaper design, entire issue — honorable mention (ACP); in-depth coverage — honorable mention (ACP)
- **"Different Standards for Christian Messages?"** editorial by Bob Terry — third place (BCA)
- **"Training Up Enemies"** Grace Thornton — news writing third place (BCA)
- **"Every Day is a Gift"** Julie Payne — feature writing second place (BCA); design, spread or story by Julie Payne, Lauren C. Grim and Neisha Fuson — award of merit (ACP); single photo (controlled) by Neisha Fuson — first place (EPA)
- **April 27 Commemorative Issue front page** by Lauren C. Grim and Jennifer Davis Rash — award of merit (ACP), award of excellence (RCC)
- **Organ Donation package** by Carrie Brown McWhorter — reporting and writing theme honorable mention (ACP)
- **Holy Land 2012** — photo series by Jennifer Davis Rash — award of merit (RCC)

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

- **Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions website** by Brian Harris — second place (BCA)
- **Facebook page** by Brian Harris — third place (BCA)

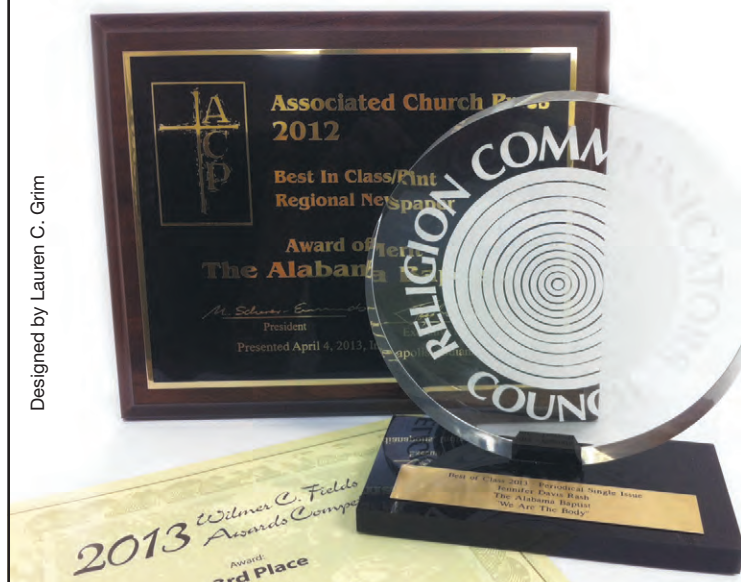
University of Mobile

- **Christmas Spectacular 2012** special event — first place (BCA)
- **Project Serve 2012** special event — second place (BCA), logo — award of merit (HEMR)
- **Leadership Banquet 2012** special event — total event silver (HEMR), brochure — silver (HEMR)
- **Viewbook 2012** by Kathy Dean — first place (BCA)
- **Charitable Giving newsletter** by Jay Adcock and Lesa Moore — first place (BCA)
- **Charitable Estate Planning newsletter** — award of merit (HEMR), third place (BCA)
- **"University of Mobile Magazine"** design by Jay Adcock, Lesa Moore and Kathy Dean — first place (BCA), external publication silver (HEMR)
- **www.umobile.edu** website — silver (HEMR)
- **Visit Day Invitation** direct mail — bronze (HEMR)

Samford University

- **SamfordYOU** interactive communication — first place (BCA)
- **Samford Move-in Day** editorial video by Brad Radice and David Rice — third place (BCA)
- **Legacy League 5K** logo by Stephanie Sides and Monica Washington — third place (BCA)
- **Samford Annual Giving Meet Isaiah** brochure by Monica Washington, Janica York Carter and Laine Williams — second place (BCA), award of excellence (RCC)
- **School of the Arts** calendar — third place (BCA), award of excellence (RCC)
- **Life Together: Walking with Bonhoeffer** booklet by Scott Camp and Janica York Carter — first place (BCA); design, overall publication — award of excellence (RCC)
- **Love in the Ruins** booklet by Scott Camp and Janica York Carter — third place (BCA)
- **Seasons: The Magazine of Samford University** — best of class (RCC)
- **"Investing in a Life-Changing Experience"** by William A. Nunnelle — best of class (RCC)
- **Reflecting on 1963** by William A. Nunnelle — award of merit (RCC)

Designed by Lauren C. Grim



Associated Church Press (ACP)

Baptist Communicators Association (BCA)

Evangelical Press Association (EPA)

Religion Communicators Council (RCC)

Higher Education Marketing Report (HEMR)

Worship can be part of Smoky Mountain vacation, too

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Tucked into the woods in Dollywood's Craftsmans Valley, the Robert F. Thomas Chapel reminds visitors of a simpler time.

In the spring and summer, seasonal flowers bloom near the front steps of the white clapboard church. At Christmas, thousands of twinkling lights adorn the chapel's exterior, including the bell tower and steeple. Inside, wooden pews and hardwood floors highlight the artistry of local woodworkers. But the chapel does more than add to the mountain character of the popular theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Each Sunday, park employees and visitors are invited inside to worship — to spend time with God in the midst of vacation fun.

During the park's operating season, guests fill the chapel for the 11:30 a.m. Sunday service. The park map and show schedule includes the worship service, though many guests wander in out of curiosity, said Dollywood chaplain Joey Buck, who preaches at the chapel through the ministry of the Smoky Mountain Resort Ministries (SMRM), a ministry program provided by the Sevier County Association of Baptists, the Tennessee Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board.

Regardless of the reason they come, visitors have the opportunity to step out of the fast pace of Dollywood and into a place of worship.

"About 60 percent of those who join us each week have never been with us, so the unspoken question is 'Why did you come?' Some come

out of habit or tradition, some because it's a novelty — a church at a theme park. But many come truly for worship and we remind them that God is at work in their lives, even when they are riding rides and seeing shows at a theme park," Buck said.

Other ministries

The church at Dollywood is just one of the many worship opportunities available in the resorts and campgrounds in and around the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and in the nearby towns of Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge and Sevierville. These ministries are coordinated by SMRM, said Bill Black, who along with his wife, Cindy, serves as co-director of the organization. As America's most visited national park, the Smokies and the surrounding area see 10 million visitors annually. Often forgotten are the thousands of seasonal employees who work in the hotels, restaurants and parks in the area, many of whom are international students. They are not forgotten by SMRM.

"In recent years, God has brought the world to us through both our visitors and through internationals who come to work in our attractions," Black said. "We are provided an amazing opportunity to impact the world for Christ as they come to us and as they go home after their work season."

Resort ministry requires creativity, as well as volunteers dedicated to building relationships with others in order to create opportunities to share the gospel, Black said. For example, in SMRM's

ministry to internationals, many of whom work at Ober Gatlinburg Ski Resort and Amusement Park, missions volunteers often invite students into their homes for meals, drive them to shopping centers and even ski or hike with them. Such contacts first show the love of Christ even as they open the door for deeper personal conversations about what it means to be a Christian, Black said.

In the winter months, many of the international students come to the United States from South America to work at restaurants, hotels and attractions like Ober Gatlinburg Ski Resort and Amusement Park. These students are generally middle and upper class students studying to be lawyers, doctors and engineers, and they are seeking an experience in the United States during their summer breaks.

Building relationships

In the spring and summer, students from Eastern Europe and Asia arrive, with the same needs for friendship and assistance.

During all seasons, missions volunteers with SMRM are ready to help the seasonal employees who work in the tourism industry, Black said.



Photo courtesy of Joey Buck

PLACE OF WORSHIP — Guests attend a Sunday worship service at the Robert F. Thomas Chapel at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

Guests at Ober Gatlinburg are not left out either. Like visitors to Dollywood, skiers at Ober Gatlinburg have an opportunity to worship on the mountain each Sunday morning. The idea of skiing to worship at the top of the bunny slope may sound strange, but Scotti Simpson, a member of the Baptist Campus Ministries at Jacksonville State University and a mission volunteer with SMRM for several seasons, said the experience is like no other.

"Some of the most holy moments I've ever experienced in worship happened on top of the mountain at Ober," he said, including one morning when snow began to fall on the 40 or so skiers just as they began to sing.

Simpson also preached at several campgrounds in the area during his time with SMRM. Each situation was different, he said. Sometimes there would be kids swimming in the pool as he spoke, other times he would be in a campground office. Doing missions in a resort setting requires an ability to "go with the flow and be flexible," he said,

but the lasting impact is worth it. "We've seen people all over the world saved because we made a friend and shared the gospel," Simpson said.

Sharing Jesus

Recently a friend from Ober named Jackie e-mailed Simpson from China to let him know that he had become a believer after learning about Jesus in Gatlinburg.

"He is now a missionary in China, and he wrote, 'I just want you to know that this is the difference you made in my life' by sharing Jesus with him," Simpson said.

Stories like Jackie's remind Buck of the intentional approach to ministry that SMRM strives to follow. Whether it's inviting someone on a hike or packing an extra bag of marshmallows to share with the family at the campsite next door, each moment in life is an opportunity to be part of what God is doing.

"God is always at work around us, and I don't have to do something to be on mission. I just need to be on mission," he said.

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Kentucky children's home lawsuit settled

A federal judge ruled May 2 that a Baptist child-care agency at the center of a long-running legal dispute between Kentucky lawmakers and citizens represented by the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State cannot block a settlement of the lawsuit agreed upon by the involved parties March 12.

Sunrise Children's Services, formerly known as Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, claimed settlement of the 13-year-old lawsuit over taxpayer funding of religious organizations would burden the Kentucky Baptist Convention agency with requirements not placed on other providers of social services that contract with the state.

Foster care is one of a number of services that Kentucky provides through contracts with Baptist-affiliated Sunrise Children's Services. U.S. District Judge Charles Simpson, however, ruled that nothing in the settlement prevents future litigation to resolve any remaining First Amendment claims.

Kentucky agreed in the settlement to change its child-care system to ensure that faith-based groups ... do not pressure children in their care.

The long-running dispute started in 1998 when Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children fired a therapist and residential counselor named Alicia Pedreira after discovering that she was a lesbian.

Pedreira lost a discrimination claim under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A separate claim joined by Kentucky taxpay-

ers, however, argued that financing agencies that discriminate against gay employees and teach children sectarian beliefs violates the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion.

A U.S. district court in Louisville dismissed the lawsuit in 2008, but the following year the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals

reversed the ruling and reinstated the Establishment Clause claim.

Kentucky agreed in the settlement 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.

Sunrise denies that religious coercion takes place in its homes and claims that reimbursements from the government, given to Sunrise for secular services it provides to children who are wards of the Commonwealth, do not violate the First Amendment ban on establishment of religion by the government. (ABP)

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

to just how many Baptist professors, teaching our Baptist pastors, were employed by Samford's Beeson Divinity School.

Of the staff listed on the school's website I found of the 29 only four were Southern Baptist.

Of the other 25 staff, two are Lutheran, six are combined Church of England-Episcopal-Anglican, three Presbyterian, one Catholic, one a woman pastor in the AME and there were a combined 12 of either "other" or no affiliation was given.

Are we as Alabama Baptists who support Samford and Beeson Divinity School interdenomi-

national or nondenominational? I believe it is something we as Alabama Baptists need to give some thought to.

Is there any difference to what we believe and teach and what other denominations believe and teach?

Timothy Davis
Brantley, Ala.

EDITOR'S NOTE — The formula used to determine Cooperative Program allocations to Alabama's three Baptist colleges — Samford University, Judson College and the University of Mobile — does not include graduate hours, according to officials at the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Only undergraduate hours are counted in the formula.

Therefore, no Alabama Baptist Cooperative Program dollars are used to support Beeson Divinity School.

According to Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland, Beeson is "supported entirely from the proceeds of the Beeson endowment, gifts from other friends and tuition paid by students."



MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: White Springs Baptist Church is prayerfully searching for the pastor God is calling to lead us. We are a multi-generational church with a history of supporting missions both in our community and internationally. We are located in a family-oriented community about 10 minutes from Gadsden. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, White Springs Baptist Church, 4411 Rainbow Drive, Rainbow City, AL 35906, by May 31.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Round Island Baptist, Athens, Ala., is seeking a part-time music minister. Submit resumes to: JeanAngel@charter.net, or mail: 5680 Bay Village Drive, Athens, AL 35611. Job description available upon request.

YOUTH MINISTER: Bivocational youth minister for Moon Lake Baptist in Mentone, Ala. Starting salary \$600 monthly. Small but active youth group. Send resume to: A. Runnels c/o mentoneandi@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR: Belmor Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational youth pastor who will serve the church by planning and leading our youth ministry. Contact belmorbaptist@att.net for more information.

CHILDREN'S PASTOR/CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR: Concord Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C., is seeking a children's pastor/children's ministry direc-

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

OTHER POSITIONS

SECRETARY/MINISTRY ASSISTANT: Harvest Baptist Church (Harvest, Ala.) Full-time position. High school diploma, minimum 5 years experience preferred. Must be proficient in Microsoft products. Email resume to: jobs@harvest-baptist.org.

CHRISTIAN NURSERY WORKERS: Voluntary position — 12 months in England at Christian nursery school (3-5 years). Accommodations and small allowance provided. Details, questions and job description — www.newlifebaptistchurch.org.uk. David Barber (pastor), davidrof282@aol.com.

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334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

TRAVEL/VACATION

NORTH CAROLINA MOUNTAIN COTTAGE: Hayesville, Western North Carolina — lovely, like new mountain cottage for rent, May–November. 2 BRs, 2 BAs. All conveniences. Weekly/monthly. On beautiful Hiwassee River. Low price \$500 plus tax weekly. Sleeps five. Children welcome. No pets. 828-389-3302.

BEACHFRONT HOME FOR RENT: Beachfront home for rent at Ft. Morgan. Beautiful gulf view. Sleeps 6. Pictures at VRBO.com — number 465737. Call 864-872-8650.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct, Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Call 251-550-9421, 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

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Want to know God?

Pastor Steve McGinnis
Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne

From the beginning of time man has sought the answer to the question, "What is the purpose or meaning of life?" Man unfortunately has sought the answer in philosophy, science and religion. However, the answer can only be found in God.

The reason man exists is solely for the glory of God. You were created for God's glory. This is a great truth, but at the same time it presents us with a major dilemma. We have not brought glory to God. Instead we have sinned greatly. The Bible says "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Most of us believe we are basically good people. Right? Wrong. Think of all the ways we sin against God: lying, stealing, coveting and failure to love God are just a few.

"For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). We deserve death, which is separation from God in a place called hell. As guilty sinners before a holy God, we are desperate for a mediator. The good news is that we have a mediator in Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that God sent His only Son to die on the cross for sinners. Jesus is the only One who could satisfy the wrath of God the Father because He alone is the spotless Lamb.

The Bible says He who knew no sin became sin for us. Jesus took our sin on Himself and bore the penalty of the wrath of God on the cross. He has defeated sin, paid the penalty and satisfied the justice of God. Only now can God justify sinners.

So what must we do then to be right with God? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Recognize you are a sinner who stands condemned before God (John 3:17). Confess your sins to God (Rom. 10:9–10). Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who alone can take away your sin (Acts 4:12). Place your faith in Jesus and follow Him (John 3:16).

If any man is in Christ, he is now a new creature. The old things have passed away and all things have become new.

Please, I beg of you from the bottom of my heart, trust not in religion, ritual or race, but trust only in Jesus Christ. He alone is Savior. To God be the glory forever.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services

Explosion kills, injures worshippers at inaugural mass

DODOMA, Tanzania — Fear and grief rocked a predominantly Christian area of northern Tanzania on May 5 after an explosion at the inaugural mass of a new church building, killing two worshippers and injuring more than 40 people.

The explosion at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church occurred before 11 a.m. when an unidentified man on a motorcycle reportedly hurled an explosive device over the church fence. Worshippers were packed into the new church building when the explosion went off, the source said. Police reportedly said four Saudi Arabian nationals and two Tanzanian citizens had been arrested, including the driver of the motorcycle. Officials urged calm in the face of furious residents. No group has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Terrorist groups have not been active in Tanzania since the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in 1998, but President Jakaya Kikwete called Sunday's explosion a terrorist attack. Previously police had warned of possible violence by Al Qaeda that could include involvement of its Somalia-based partner, Al Shabaab, the source said. At the same time, some area residents believe elements bent on creating religious conflict were behind the explosion, he added. With a population that is 34.2 percent Muslim, Tanzania is 54 percent Christian; most of the rest of religious adherents hold ethnic tribal beliefs, according to Operation World.

Christians in Morocco fear fatwa's harsher treatment

RABAT, Morocco — A Moroccan *fatwa* (legal judgment) calling for the execution of those who leave Islam has left many Christian converts in turmoil. There is still much debate over how the fatwa, which only recently came to light after the government's top authority on Islam issued it last year, could change laws in Morocco. But a Moroccan Christian convert active in the house church movement said many former Muslims who are now Christians fear for their lives.

"The fatwa showed us that our country is still living in the old centuries — no freedom, no democracy," he said. "Unfortunately, we feel that we aren't protected. We can be arrested or now even killed any time and everywhere."

In a publication explaining its ruling, the high council said it based its decision in part on verses from the Koran, and in part on verses from the Hadith — one that quotes Muhammad, Islam's prophet, as saying, "If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him." Islamic scholars use the Hadith, also known as the "Sayings and Deeds of the Prophet," along with the Koran as a basis for determining *sharia* (Islamic law).



BP photo

FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION — U.S. Army Chaplain Jeff Houston (right) takes time to pray with American soldiers prior to a mission in Iraq in 2009.

'A top concern'

Moore, Ezell concerned about religious freedom in military

Two Southern Baptist leaders have issued a statement voicing concern about religious freedom within the U.S. military but also cautioning Christians to refrain from jumping to conclusions about recent incidents in the military perceived by some as threats to religious liberty.

The statement was issued by Russell Moore, president-elect of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB). The ERLC is the SBC's public policy arm. NAMB oversees the endorsement of chaplains to the U.S. military on behalf of the SBC.

"We have no interest in fomenting conspiracy theories," the statement reads. "We have no interest in misrepresenting our military leaders. At the same time, we do not want to ignore potential threats to religious liberty."

The statement addresses several reported incidents that have raised

concern among Southern Baptists and evangelicals in recent weeks.

"These reports have elicited a great deal of concern and confusion," the statement reads. "In some cases, misinformation has been mixed with fact, with the possible result of furthering already tense relationships between military and religious communities."

'Subjective' definitions

Ezell said he hopes the statement will serve two primary purposes.

"We want our chaplains and troops to know their religious freedoms are a top concern for us," Ezell said. "We want the U.S. military to know we are a friend. But right now we are a friend who has some serious concerns."

The statement includes a detailed section listing concerns about how the Department of Defense defines terms like "evangelizing" and "proselytizing" as it relates to military personnel who want to share their faith with others.

"What incidents have taken

place, we wonder, that would call for this seemingly arbitrary distinction between 'evangelizing' and 'proselytizing'?" the statement asks. "With a subjective interpretation and adjudication of such cases, we need reassurance that such would not restrict the free exercise of religion for our chaplains and military personnel."

"After all, who defines what is proselytizing and what is evangelism? What could seem to be a friendly conversation about spiritual matters to one serviceperson could be perceived or deliberately mischaracterized as 'proselytizing' to the person on the receiving end. The fact that this has been raised at all in such a subjective fashion could have a chilling effect on service personnel sharing their faith at all."

Moore, who begins his responsibilities at the ERLC on June 1, called on the military to engage in a dialogue with Southern Baptists and other evangelicals on such issues. "We agree that no one should engage in coercion when it comes to sharing their faith with others. But there must also be room for freedom for our chaplains and military members to be distinctively Southern Baptist and for others to be distinctively Catholic or Jewish or Muslim as the case may be."

Doug Carver, the retired (Major General) Army Chief of Chaplains who now heads NAMB's chaplaincy ministry, echoed the concerns expressed by Moore and Ezell while reiterating SBC support for members of the military.

"Those who serve in our Armed Forces have no better friends than Southern Baptists who pray for their safety and work for their ability to worship freely," Carver said. (BP)

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Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to Date through April 30, 2013

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CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,558,333
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,948,745
Over Goal for Month	\$390,412

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$14,233,332
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$14,454,653
Over Goal for Year	\$221,321

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

It's not that easy

Christian leaders tackle stigma of mental illness, hope churches can help

Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, was getting ready to work in the yard in the fall of 2009 when the phone rang. His daughter was on the line.

"Daddy, I love you," she said. "Tell Mama and the girls I love them, too."

Then she was gone.

Melissa Page Strange, 32, took her own life just after hanging up the phone with her dad.

"I do not want you to imagine what that is like," he said.

For years, Page did not share the painful details of Melissa's death, fearing that some Christians might speak ill of her if they knew. Mental illness and suicide were taboo topics for many churches, seen as a kind of spiritual failure.

But that may be starting to change.

Page and several other Baptist leaders plan to meet in Dallas this spring to address mental illness. The meeting was prompted by the Newtown, Conn., school shooting and has gained more urgency since the suicide of Matthew Warren, 27-year-old son of California megachurch pastor Rick Warren.

Churches can help

Matthew Warren's suicide in April has prompted a number of evangelical leaders to talk about how churches can better help those dealing with mental illness in their congregations.

Page, now president of the convention's Nashville-based Executive Committee, is telling his daughter's story in a forthcoming book called "Melissa."

He hopes the book will help other families who are grieving from suicide. He also hopes to take away some of the stigma and shame that surrounds mental illness.

"There is a sense that everything you have tried has failed," he said.

Bill Ritter, author of "Take the Dimness of My Soul Away: Healing After a Loved One's Suicide," said people affected by mental illness often steer clear of church. Some feel ashamed and others are just overwhelmed.

"For as much as we talk about the church as the place you turn when life is falling apart — the reality is that people often stay away from church when

life is falling apart," he said.

Ritter was pastor of First United Methodist Church, Birmingham, Mich., in the early 1990s when his 27-year-old son, Bill, took his own life. A few weeks after the funeral, Ritter talked about his son's struggles in a sermon.

Sharing his story made it easier for other people in the church to talk about how mental illness had affected their own families, he said. "You can't heal what you can't name," he said.

Ed Stetzer, president of Nashville-based LifeWay Research,

wants to see more churches discuss mental illness openly. A longtime friend of Warren's and Page's, he knew of Matthew Warren's struggles with depression, which resisted treatment.

In a blog post after learning of Matthew's suicide, Stetzer wrote about how mental illness has affected his own family. Several of his relatives have taken their lives, as did a parishioner in a church that he served as a young pastor.

"We need to stop hiding mental illness," Stetzer said.

Stetzer said some evangelical Christians think that if they pray enough or become more spiritual, then their mental illness will go away. But they don't look at other health issues the same way.

"People who become a Christian and have a broken leg will still have a broken leg," he said. "We tend to think that Jesus fixes what is in our heads, and medicine fixes what is in our body. Sometimes what is in our heads needs medicine."

David McKnight agreed.

A physician by trade, McKnight leads the Celebrate Recovery support group at Belle Aire Baptist

Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn. The group, which is about 10 years old, draws between 35 and 60 people to the church on Tuesday nights.

The program is part of a national movement first started at Warren's Saddleback Church. Some members are dealing with addiction, while others have depression or other mental illness. Some had been told that faith could solve their problems, said McKnight — but it's not that easy.

Celebrate Recovery

"We would never tell someone who is nearsighted that it's because they don't have enough faith," he said. "We do that with people who deal with depression."

McKnight helped start Celebrate Recovery at his church because of a personal meltdown about 10 years ago. At first he was resistant, thinking his troubles weren't as bad as those of people dealing with drug addiction or other issues.

Then the lightbulb came on, he said, and he realized that he, too, had struggles and it was OK to admit to them.

McKnight said that growing up in church, he'd learned to keep up appearances, even when life was difficult.

"Too often in churches there is this belief that you have to be perfect — that you have to keep a smile on your face when your world is falling apart," he said.

David Thomas, director of men's and boys' counseling for Daystar

Counseling Ministries in Nashville, hopes churches will discuss the issue in church services as well as support groups.

He said many churches have started talking about finances in recent years because of the economic downturn. Thomas thinks churches

need to do the same for mental illness.

"We have very defined resources for families that are struggling financially," he said. "We don't have defined resources for families who are struggling emotionally — and we need them." (RNS)

"Too often in churches there is this belief that you have to be perfect."

**David McKnight
Belle Aire Baptist Church
Murfreesboro, Tenn.**

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‘Get back up to the plate’



Photo by Brian Harris

More than 700 senior adults attend the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ Senior Adult Evangelism Conference at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, on May 6.



Photo by Brian Harris

Bobby Welch

Senior Adult Evangelism Conference inspires, challenges attendees

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Each year, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) hosts its Senior Adult Evangelism Conference at churches in either Montgomery or Birmingham, and this year’s event took place at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery. The event — held on May 6 — drew participation from more than 700 senior adults from across the state, and Heritage Baptist even had to open their balcony area to accommodate all in attendance.

“It was a great success — just tremendous,” said Sammy Gilbreath, director of the SBOM’s office of evangelism. “The congregation was plugged into every speaker, and it was a good, positive day.”

Speakers included Daniel Wilson, pas-

tor of West End Baptist Church, Clanton; Dale Huff of the SBOM and Bobby Welch, former Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president who currently serves with the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

All three speakers “hit home runs,” Gilbreath said, but attendees were especially challenged by Welch’s message.

‘Get re-engaged’

“He took the SBC statistics on baptisms and showed the terrible decline we’ve been facing since 1972 and he said, ‘You’re the group to turn this around. If this age group doesn’t turn that around, it will be too late to stop it. You’ve got to get re-engaged. It’s easy to think, I’ve done my thing and lived my life, but you’ve got to get back up to the plate and you’ve got to do this,’” Gilbreath said of Welch’s message. “It just took the air out of the room.”

In addition to the speakers, the conference included musical performances by

Karen Peck and New River and the senior adult choirs of Heritage Baptist and Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery.

“The musicians were outstanding,” Gilbreath said. “They related to the people, and they stayed and fellowshiped. They stayed around during the break time and got to know the people.”

Teman Knight, pastor of host church Heritage Baptist, said he received positive feedback from the event.

“We were privileged to host such a strategic event that both inspires and challenges our senior adults to continue to be faithful instruments of God to bring people into a life-changing relationship with Him,” Knight said. “I am so thankful for Bro. Sammy and his leadership in helping Alabama reach those who are lost without Christ.”

Gilbreath is already looking forward to next year’s conference, which will be hosted by Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham. ☛

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I don't have a will.

I don't have a will.

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I don't have a will.

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I don't have a will.

I don't have a will.

I have a will.

I have a will.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 19

Explore the Bible

By Dale Younce

Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

LOOK FOR SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE

Titus 2:1-15

We live in a time when we do not want to discriminate against persons. In many churches, a generation gap has developed so that older and younger adults rarely relate to each other. All adults will benefit from this study of Paul's advice to a variety of life situations, with the emphasis that God's grace is present for every circumstance.

Aging Gracefully (1-5)

A healthy church blends doctrinal teaching with practical instruction. With this core principle, the church can minister in various areas of church life.

Older Christians must strive for excellence by living godly lives, giving younger Christians examples to follow. Aging makes some people callous, bitter and cynical. Those who are spiritually healthy are optimistic, thankful and pleasant company.

Older men (those 60 and above) are to live honorably and respectably. They are to be sensible and healthy in the faith. In the same way, older Christian women (those who no longer have child-rearing responsibilities) are to live lives of reverent behavior. As experienced, godly women, they are to take the lead in teaching younger women. Their training includes not only teaching young mothers how to keep house and cook but also how to maintain proper mental and spiritual attitudes.

Demonstrating Integrity (6-8)

Titus was to admonish the younger men (age 12 and over) to be sensible and self-controlled in every area of life. Titus was obligated to be the pattern of the moral and spiritual qualities he preached. In his public ministry and in his private life, Titus must demonstrate integrity, seriousness and a soundness of speech that could not be condemned.

Working Faithfully (9-10)

Paul also gave Titus instructions for slaves (who made up a significant portion of first century congregations). The Bible acknowledges the existence of customs and cultures with which it does not agree (i.e. polygamy). Paul does not condemn slavery outright, but,

in the first century life, he was most interested in providing help for those believers who were slaves. Paul lists three sins that Christians who serve others should avoid.

First is disobedience. Believers were to obey their masters and seek to please them. It is possible to do a job grudgingly. But the Christian slave has a heavenly Master whom he is to obey wholeheartedly (Eph. 6:5-9). All such service can be done as unto Christ and will be fully rewarded by Him.

Second is the sin of talking back. This includes arguing, complaining and cursing. The wrong use of the mouth would certainly be a poor testimony for a Christian slave.

The third sin is stealing. It was easy for a slave to pilfer little items and sell them and to report that they were broken or stolen. But a Christian was bound to strict honesty.

Many slaves had the privilege of leading their masters to the Lord in the early days of Christianity, largely because of the difference between pagan slaves and Christian slaves was so glaringly obvious. Their behavior made attractive the teaching that God saves sinners. What was true of Christian slaves should be true of all Christian employees today.

Living Righteously (11-15)

Paul had called for consistent behavior by all believers. Now he shows that one of God's great purposes of our salvation is to produce lives of unadulterated holiness. It is God's grace that redeems us from the guilt and penalty of our sin. This salvation comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This salvation is for all people who receive it.

God's grace transforms us, saving us from the power of sin. The same grace that saves us also trains and disciplines us to be the kind of people who glorify God. This grace teaches us to shun ungodliness and embrace holiness. This grace transforms us by purifying us and making us God's own special possession.

God's grace saves us from the presence of sin when Christ returns. Paul did not go into detail about the events surrounding the return of Christ. Believers should always be expecting His return and live like one who will see Him face to face.

Bible Studies for Life

By Scott McGinnis

Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

BECOMING A PERSON OTHERS NEED

Proverbs 6:6-11, 16-19, 23-27

Much of the wisdom of Proverbs is aimed at maintaining healthy relationships. This chapter outlines patterns of life that lead to strong connections with one's self and one's community.

Work Diligently (6-11)

The Book of Proverbs shows great interest in nature, for the created order reflects the values of the Creator. Studying the natural world can help one see clearly the cause-and-effect relationships that Proverbs seeks to relate to the moral world we inhabit.

In this case, the tirelessness of the ant is used as a lesson to warn against laziness, one of three passages in Proverbs that condemn the sluggard (24:30-34; 26:13-16). The diligence of the ant comes from an internal motivation. No one needs to tell her what to do. She simply recognizes the task at hand and sets to it in the proper season.

Palestine has two basic seasons: about eight months of rain and four dry months during summer for harvest time. In the kind of agrarian society that formed the backdrop of Proverbs, a poor harvest might well mean famine and death, and failure to prepare for the future was foolishness.

Taken in isolation, the two questions that come in verse nine seem to urge one on to a ceaseless (and sleepless) life of anxious toil. However, elsewhere we see that sleep itself is not the enemy (3:24) but a squandering of one's energies and resources. Rest and relaxation are necessary for healthy living but like so much of life must be managed within certain boundaries.

Demonstrate Integrity (16-19)

These verses are an exposition and commentary on the shifty-eyed character described in the verses immediately preceding (vv. 12-15), which vividly depict a ne'er-do-well who is always intent on making mischief. The scoundrel's body language — winking, shuffling, pointing — is the outward manifestations of a flawed inward character.

The distinctive numerical form of verses

16-19 (N, N+1) occurs elsewhere in Proverbs (30:15-31) as well as other Hebrew poetic writing (Amos 1:3-2:8). This device serves to draw attention to the final item in the list as if to say "and worst of all ..."

Considered in this light, it is interesting to see the direction the proverb takes. Pride, deceit, treachery and the plotting of evil are all most harmful when they are practiced by "one who sows discord in a family," or literally, "strife between brothers" (v. 16). The Hebrew word for brother can refer to filial relationships but also to other kinship relations or even close friendships.

Either way, the message is clear: one who would live as God desires must begin by practicing wisdom in his most intimate relationships. One who cannot live well with family members and friends will ultimately lack the resources to form deep and meaningful bonds with anyone.

Exhibit Purity (23-27)

Just as leisure and rest must be kept within limits, sexual desire must also be fulfilled within certain bounds.

This passage is written from a male perspective that saw wives as property, thus the warning against adultery is in the context of taking what belongs to another. This may be seen in the comparison between relations with a prostitute and relations with a neighbor's wife: one costs a loaf of bread; the other, one's life (v. 26). The implication is that while immorality may be destructive, a husband's fury over adultery will not be quenched except by the ultimate price (v. 34).

At the heart of biblical wisdom is the recognition of limits. Every choice we make or relationship into which we enter involves some sort of restriction: we choose work over leisure; we decide to be patient and loving with our family members rather than angry or manipulative; we marry one person to the exclusion of all others.

The paradox is that in the midst of all these self-imposed limitations we find ourselves free to love God and one another in the deepest way imaginable.

Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13			14			
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- Across**
- Tennis name Steffi ____.
 - Because their ____ is come unto me. (1 Sam. 9:16)
 - A Christmas carol.
 - Volcanic output.
 - Aaron and ____ stayed up his hands. (Ex. 17:12)
 - The people that followed ____ prevailed. (1 Kings 16:22)
 - City of Judah. (Josh. 15:32, 50)
 - Sounds of questioning.
 - Blood vessel.
 - Practicer of divination.
 - From then until now.
 - The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, ____ sinners in the congregation. (Ps. 1:5)
 - Facial twitch.
 - I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the _____. (Rev. 3:18)
 - Spake of his ____ which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:31)
 - Blackbird.
 - Thieves ____ through and steal. (Matt. 6:19)
 - But I will not with ink and ____ write unto thee. (3 John 13)

- Tambourines. (1 Sam. 18:6)
- Went rapidly.
- Compass direction.
- Stadium cheer.
- Sought how they might take him by _____. (Mark 14:1)
- Taking away.
- ____rn unto me, and I will return unto you. (Mal. 3:7)
- Hawaiian dish.
- Ye who sometimes ____ far off are made nigh. (Eph. 2:13)
- Belonging to the mother of Hezekiah. (2 Kings 18:1, 2)
- The ____ shall not smite thee by day. (Ps. 121:6)
- Sicilian volcano.
- Stand open.
- Possessive pronoun.
- I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my _____. (Luke 7:6)
- Down**
- A wise son maketh a ____ father. (Prov. 10:1)
- Indian princess.
- Tel ____.
- There arose a mighty ____ in that land. (Luke 15:14)
- Shall ____ up his wife which he hath taken. (Deut. 24:5)
- German river.
- Years. (abbr.)
- New at an activity.
- A sign of the future.
- Norse explorer.
- Thou shalt bind this ____ of scarlet thread in the window. (Josh. 2:18)
- Negative reply.
- I was ____, and ye visited me. (Matt. 25:36)
- Beverage.
- All the ____ is the Lord's. (Lev. 3:16)
- ____ moment, in the twinkling of an eye. (1 Cor. 15:52; 2 words)
- And the ____, which the Lord God had taken from man. (Gen. 2:22)
- Desert. (abbr.)
- Appendix. (abbr.)
- Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall ____ God. (Matt. 5:8)
- From the beginning of the year even unto the ____ of the year. (Deut. 11:12)
- Bring forth the ____ robe. (Luke 15:22)
- Route. (abbr.)
- This evil people, which ____ to hear my words. (Jer. 13:10)

36. Light rain.	38. For the righteous God trieth the hearts and _____. (Ps. 7:9)	39. I ____ Alpha and Omega. (Rev. 1:8)	40. Jagged cliff.	41. And they slew the kings of Midian ... Zur ... Hur, and _____. (Num. 31:8)	42. Toppling over.	43. Drive out.	44. Turn down.	45. River in Italy.	46. His ____ also shall not wither. (Ps. 1:3)	48. Greek letter.
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RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature



Sound Bites

By Rick Sharp and Adam Borden

NORTH POINT KIDS

Shine!
North Point Ministries, Inc./EMI
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North Point Community Church, Alpharetta, Ga., just keeps rolling along with culturally relevant music for all ages. On April 10 they released their first music project aimed at elementary-aged children, “Shine!” That the record debuted at the No. 4 spot on iTunes Children’s Music chart says much about the quality, energy and excitement in the new album.



Featuring many from North Point’s impressive set of artists and musicians, including Dove Award-winner Seth Condrey, “Shine!” sounds as current as anything Justin Bieber, Taylor

Swift or One Direction has to offer. If you’re thinking Disney with lyrically uplifting, God-centered messages, you’re pretty close. Our kids are going to love this music.

I continue to be wowed by the quality of the writing, performing and production of North Point’s musical outreach. This may well be the musical model for reaching a lost world through the local church.

Certainly, I’ve found few churches consistently producing music at this level of relevance and quality. Let’s hope they continue for a long time. (Sharp)

THE MCKAMEYS

Precious Seed
Crossroads Music

Psalm 126:6 says, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Since 1954, Ruben, Peg, Sheryl and

Connie McKamey have sowed the seed of the gospel everywhere they have traveled. If you have ever experienced The McKameys live in concert or spent any time



with them one on one you know that before they ever take the stage they have prepared themselves in the storehouse of the Savior.

Let’s sit back and listen with a fertile heart as The McKameys continue to sow their “Precious Seed.”

One of the songs on “Precious Seed” that Peg sings is a great testimony song written by Sheryl, “Nothing But Grace,” which gives credit where credit is due. Our life as believers is all owed to the grace of God.

Peg also takes the lead on “Story Untold,” which reminds us

that the best is yet to come for the child of God. Sheryl also is featured on “I Am a Vessel” and her own song, “When He Speaks.” Sheryl possesses a certain quality in her voice that is filled with a passion and sincerity that reaches right into your soul.

Connie sings one of my favorite songs on this record. “The Touch” says exactly what I feel about the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. I, too, would not trade anything this world holds in exchange for the touch of the Comforter.

Some people might have been under the impression that Roger

Fortner does not speak but — brace yourself — in fact, he actually sings. Roger usually lets his guitars do the talking, but on “Precious Seed” we are introduced to his vocals on the Steve Chapman song, “Unspoken Request.” This is a great story song that lends itself well to Roger’s genuine balladeer sound.

OK, McKameys fans, for classic southern gospel, turn up “Story Untold” and “When I Think About Heaven.” If you need proof that The McKameys are more than what you thought, turn up “Unspoken Request” or “Finish Well.” (Borden)

Book Reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

Which Bible Translation Should I Use?

Andreas J. Köstenberger and David A. Croteau, Eds. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012. 204 pp. (Paperback).

How do you decide which translation to use? Do you take the easy way out and choose whatever version your pastor preaches from, or do you make your decision a different way? The editors of this book have provided a wealth of information to help you decide from among four of the most popular translations.

The book begins with a short history of Bible translations, explaining how several pre-English and English translations came to be. After describing the differences between translations and paraphrases and what goes into each, the authors present a graphic that shows where a dozen of the best-known English Bibles lie on the spectrum between the two. Interesting information.

The rest of the book is devoted to four modern versions of the Bible: the English Standard Version (ESV), the New International Version (NIV), the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) and the New Living Translation (NLT), with a chapter devoted to each. Each of the four chapters, written by a scholar who served on the translation committee for that ver-

sion, describes the history of the version and the philosophy behind the translation process, sharing details of problematic and/or controversial passages and why they were handled as they were.

While the book may not tell you which translation is the “right” one, it will certainly help you become better informed about the four versions examined.

That Summer

Jo Huddleston. Crossville, Tenn.: *Sword of the Spirit Publishing*, 2012. 217 pp. (Paperback).

Oh, no — not another “coming-of-age in the Great Depression” book. That’s what I thought when I saw the cover and read the blurb on this book. Gritting my teeth, I opened the book and began reading.

It WAS set during the Great Depression. And it WAS a coming-of-age story. But the similarities to those other books end there. Jo Huddleston has written an engaging story of a young man who escapes his father’s abuse only to be faced with moral choices he had never encountered before and was ill prepared to deal with. Rich with conflict and well-drawn characters, “That Summer” was one of those books that I didn’t get far away from until I had finished it.

This is Huddleston’s first fiction book, although she has published a

number of short stories, nonfiction books and articles. “That Summer” is the first in the Caney Creek trilogy; the second, “Beyond the Past,” was recently released. I can’t wait to read it.

The Adventures of Little Mouse (Life Outside the Mouse Hole)

Sherri Williams. Bloomington, Ind.: *AuthorHouse*, 2012. 43 pp. (Paperback).

The stories in “The Adventures of Little Mouse” were inspired by the hardships faced by her daughter. A children’s book, each story has a bit of cautionary wisdom designed to help children make good decisions.

The stories have a similar theme: going out into the world and encountering adversity, then realizing that Little Mouse’s parents were right and he should pay attention to their advice. While the stories are well written (if a bit repetitive), the book has serious production problems: too many words on each page with too few illustrations to keep a young child’s attention, and too many pages with no illustrations at all.

If the beautiful full-page illustrations had been cut down to a half-page and more illustrations included, a child might be more likely to sit still and listen to it.

Christian Marketplace Top Ten Best Sellers

Nonfiction

1. Jesus Calling, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. Heaven Is for Real, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
3. Jesus Calling, Large-Print Deluxe Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. The 5 Love Languages, Gary Chapman (Moody)
5. Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. Jesus Today, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
7. Circle Maker, Mark Batterson (Zondervan)
8. Jesus Calling, Women’s Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
9. Daily Devotions for Women, Jewell Johnson (Barbour)
10. Not a Fan, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)

Youth

1. The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zondervan)
2. Jesus Calling, 365 Devotions for Kids, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. Jesus Calling Bible Storybook, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
4. The Action Bible, Sergio Cariello (David C Cook)
5. Jesus Calling — Teen Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. The Beginner’s Bible, Kelly Pulley (Zondervan)
7. God Gave Us Easter, Lisa Tawn Bergren (Waterbrook/Multnomah)
8. Heaven Is for Real for Kids, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)
9. The Action Bible New Testament, Sergio Cariello (David C Cook)
10. Not a Fan Teen Edition, Kyle Idleman (Zondervan)



(L to r) Jason Jamison, Ruben Juarez, Mike Donehey, Jeff Owen and Brendon Shirley of the Dove Award-winning group Tenth Avenue North hope the songs on their newest album, 'The Struggle,' will point students and young adults straight to the gospel.



Photos courtesy of Provident Label Group

'The Struggle'

Tenth Avenue North hopes to encourage listeners in difficult times

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With their new album, "The Struggle," the Dove Award-winning band Tenth Avenue North hopes to point teenagers and young adults straight to the gospel — so they can connect to the truth, hope and love of Christ in the midst of life's challenges.

"One of the main reasons that we write songs is to convey the truth and the struggle to believe that truth," lead singer Mike Donehey said. "The theme of the new album implies permission to struggle with life's challenges but encourages listeners not to remain in that place of struggle."

"Things are going to be hard, but we have something greater to look forward to. We are free to struggle, but because of what Christ did on the

cross, we don't need to struggle to be free."

"During our concerts, it's an opportunity for us to further explain these songs so people can connect to the truth of the gospel," drummer Jason Jamison said.

He said the band hopes the record will come to life in a sense and listeners will walk away encouraged.

"So often, when we go through struggles and difficult times in life, our initial response is to ask God to take the pain away. But we have to remember that these issues in life aren't surprises to God. Sometimes, we go through these situations so we will learn that our fullness and joy is completely found in Him," Jamison said.

Donehey agreed.

"When people listen to these songs, I hope that they will realize that they are not alone in their struggles," he said.

"They can connect to a Savior who loves them unconditionally and is with them every step of the way." ■■

"We are free to struggle, but because of what Christ did on the cross, we don't need to struggle to be free."

Mike Donehey
lead singer, Tenth Avenue North

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

US at immigration 'crossroads,' says Page

TRAVELERS REST, S.C. — As support for immigration reform continues to grow among Southern Baptists and other evangelical Christians, Frank Page said in a recent speech that the U.S. stands "at a crossroad of opportunity" for dealing justly with the nation's undocumented immigrants. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee, spoke at a New American Generation Conference at North Greenville University's Turner Chapel. Alberto Gonzales, who was attorney general under President George W. Bush, was keynote speaker for the event.

Page quoted Micah 6:8: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Said Page, "This should be our platform for immigration reform."

The SBC must do a better job of reaching ethnic groups, Page added. "I want to see their involvement in all areas of convention life," he said. "We must do rightly and act justly."

"Humility calls for kindness," Page added. "While some didn't agree with the messenger-approved 2011 SBC resolution on immigration, we must deal with each other with a humble spirit."

SBC messengers in 2011 approved a resolution on immigration reform that called for the advancement of the gospel of Jesus while pursuing justice and compassion. The measure urged the government to make a priority of border security and holding businesses accountable in their hiring. It also requested that public officials establish, after securing the borders, "a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures, for those undocumented immigrants already living in our country." It specified that the resolution was not to be interpreted as supporting amnesty.

Gonzales told the audience he is a "champion for immigration reform because the right policy will help with security and our economy. Diversity is one of the great strengths of the United States."

Baptist historian, scholar McBeth dies at 81

FORT WORTH, Texas — H. Leon McBeth, a Baptist historian and scholar who wrote nine books, died April 29 at age 81.

McBeth, retired chair of the history department at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, received numerous awards for his contributions to Baptist history, including a Festschrift, "Turning Points in Baptist History," in which colleagues paid tribute to his life's work.

His books included "The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness," published in 1987. In 1990, the Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention — since renamed LifeWay Christian Resources — contracted with him to write an interpretive history for the publishing house's 100th anniversary.

McBeth grew up in Plainview, Texas, and graduated from Wayland Baptist University, where he later served as trustee. He earned his master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Seminary. He was a member of the Baptist History & Heritage Society and the 1989 recipient of the society's W.O. Carver Distinguished Service Award. "His life and work profoundly inspired and impacted many of us," said Bruce Gourley, the society's executive director.

Gourley called it fitting that the Spring 2013 *Baptist History & Journal* edition mailed to society members in early May is a tribute to McBeth. Gourley said the society will also pay tribute to him at the group's annual conference, May 20–22 in Richmond, Va.

Wayland Baptist University fires CFO for alleged theft

PLAINVIEW, Texas — A Texas Baptist university has fired and sued its chief financial officer over alleged financial mismanagement. Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas, filed a civil lawsuit April 24 against James E. Smith in Hale County District Court, according to a statement on the school's website. The school affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas said Smith, chief financial officer since 2001, was suspended March 13 and dismissed April 11 for violations of university policy.

University officials said in a court affidavit that Smith admitted to embezzling about \$40,000 over a four-year period. According to the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, Smith told executive vice president and provost Bobby Hall that he had been using funds to pay personal debts and that he did not have money to pay it back. Hall's affidavit said university officials began an internal investigation after a financial review of one campus building renovation and construction of Jimmy Dean Hall, a new men's dormitory. ■■