

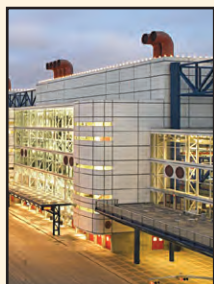


INSIDE



Nigeria home to world's worst attacks on Christians

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SBC annual meeting set for June 11-12 in Houston

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Alabama Baptists can 'be responsible,' fight health issues

◆ Page 13



Designed by Lauren C. Grim

Computer simulator preps military chaplains for battlefield

The animated figure on the computer screen moves carefully among the wounded, darting from one fallen figure to another. Trailing the combat medics, the uniformed military chaplain kneels and performs "spiritual triage," assessing who is dead, who is soon to die and who is likely to survive.

For the dead, there is silent prayer; for the gravely wounded and those in pain, there are words of comfort. Checking dog tags to determine the faith of the fallen, the pastor uses language consistent with each faith tradition. At each point in the action, a prompt asks users

what they think is the appropriate response, and then offers them feedback on their choices.

Veterans say nothing short of the real thing prepares someone for serving under fire, but a computer simulation company has been awarded a \$100,000 development contract by the U.S. Army Research Laboratory's simulation-technology center in Orlando, Fla., to develop a program designed to help prospective military chaplains.

Relevant situations

A prototype, to include a variety of battlefield scenarios and vignettes, is expected to be delivered to the Army by the middle of this year, according to officials at the lab. If accepted by the Department of Defense, it is likely to become part of the curriculum at the chaplain training school at Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C.

The computer-simulation program is designed

primarily for those who will serve in harm's way in Afghanistan through the promised U.S. pullout in 2014, and in future conflicts. However, developers say the simulation will remain relevant for any terrorist attack or natural disaster involving mass casualties.

Chaplain Jeff Zust, an Army lieutenant colonel and an EMT, was deployed for 15 months in Iraq. Based on that experience, he later served on a team of chaplains, enlisted chaplain's assistants and technology and training specialists tasked with adapting existing medic triage simulators for chaplains serving in forward operating bases and forward aid stations.

"In combat, unit ministry teams need to know how to respond to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual trauma," said Zust, 54, a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "This ability comes with experience. However,

(See 'Serious-game,' page 7)

"In combat, unit ministry teams need to know how to respond to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual trauma."

Chaplain Jeff Zust
Army lieutenant colonel and an EMT

COMMENT

‘Tell Me More, You Big Hero’

Sometimes editorial cartoons express ideas difficult to put into words. In poignant and sometimes dramatic ways, cartoons combine the emotion of art and the impact of well-chosen words to drive home a truth with more power than words alone could ever have.

Former *Birmingham News* cartoonist Scott Stantis, now with the *Chicago Tribune*, did exactly that with his April 30 editorial cartoon. In a two-panel cartoon, Stantis highlighted the difference between the adulation poured out on professional basketball player Jason Collins who recently announced that he was gay and the dismissive attitude heaped on Tim Tebow for his public identity as a Christian.

In panel 1 of the cartoon, Tebow is shown with his New York Jets number 15 across his back saying “I’m Christian.” A bored sports writer walks by ignoring Tebow and mumbles “Keep it to yourself.” Panel 2 shows Collins wearing his Boston Celtics number 98 jersey saying “I’m gay.” The same sports writer excitedly thrusts a microphone into Collins’ face saying “Tell me more, you big hero.”

Media lynching

Not only did the media world go into a frenzy over Collins’ story, those Christians who dared raise a caution flag about all Collins said were treated to the equivalent of a media lynching.

Collins made history April 29 when he became the first player from a major American team sport to declare he is gay. *Sports Illustrated* broke the story complete with a front cover photo of Collins with the words “The gay athlete.”

The announcement made Collins an instant hero. Congratulations and supportive statements rolled in from celebrities and sports stars. His announcement became the topic of every sports talk show and even made national news. The day after the story became public, Collins gave a lengthy television interview to George Stephanopoulos on ABC News’ “Good Morning America.”

On one of those shows Chris Broussard, an NBA analyst for ESPN and president of a Christian men’s ministry called K.I.N.G., questioned whether anyone can live in open rebellion to God and still call oneself a Christian.

Broussard, a regular on ESPN’s “Outside the Lines,” said on that show, “Personally I don’t believe that you can live an openly homosexual



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

lifestyle or in openly premarital sex between heterosexuals, if you’re openly living that type of lifestyle, then the Bible says you know them by their fruits, it says that’s a sin. If you’re openly living in unrepentant sin, whatever it may be — not just homosexuality, adultery, fornication, premarital sex between heterosexuals, whatever it may be — I believe that’s walking in open rebellion to God and to Jesus Christ. So I would not characterize that person as a Christian because I don’t think the Bible would characterize them as a Christian.”

Broussard did not dump his convictions on an uninterested ESPN audience. His comments came in response to a question by the host of the TV show about Collins’ claim to be a Christian. In other words, Broussard, a recognized Christian who had spoken out against homosexuality previously, was asked by the host of “Outside the Lines” to give his personal opinion about Collins’ claim to be homosexual and Christian.

For honestly answering that question, Broussard was verbally tarred and feathered by many in the media.

Kelly Dwyer of Yahoo! Sports, for example, wrote, “It’s infuriating that Chris would go to this place immediately after talking up the massive outpouring of support (for Collins).” Dwyer called Broussard’s comments a “twisted take” and questioned how anyone could hold such views in 2013. He challenged ESPN for allowing Broussard’s comments on its sports show and said Broussard “used the pulpit of a sports talk show” to state what the Bible says about sexual behaviors.

ESPN quickly rushed to apologize. “We regret that a respectful discussion of personal viewpoints became a distraction from today’s news. ESPN is fully committed to diversity and

welcomes Jason Collins’ announcement,” the network said.

One has to ask what kind of world is it where *Sports Illustrated* can do a major story on a homosexual athlete and the athlete and the story be praised and applauded while one who espouses biblically based standards of sexual morality is attacked and condemned.

As Stantis illustrated in his cartoon, many seem to want Christians to keep their faith to themselves but want to celebrate the homosexual.

Why is it permissible for a sports talk show to talk about being a gay athlete and wrong for someone to point out the Bible calls that practice sin? If one is free to advocate for gays in the media, why is one not free to speak against the practice?

Some argue that religious convictions, especially Christian religious convictions, should be addressed in private, not in the public square. But these same voices claim the privilege of advancing their philosophy of life at every opportunity.

It is important to remember that as far back as 1961 the United States Supreme Court described secular humanism as a religion (*Torcaso v. Watkins*). More recently in 2007 the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Wisconsin ruled “atheism is religion” because it expresses a philosophy of life.

Voices like Dwyer who reject the God of the Bible in favor of their own “philosophy of life” are advancing religious convictions just as surely as Broussard spoke about practices the Bible calls sin.

If Broussard was out of bounds, so was *Sports Illustrated*; so were the other commentators who praised Collins; so were news shows like “Good Morning America” that favorably present Collins and his gay lifestyle.

Contend for biblical values

The truth is that those who reject biblical teachings are not going to stop doing everything they can to advance behaviors the Bible condemns. Christians cannot stop either. Christians have just as much right to speak in the public square as anyone else. Disagreements should be expected but Christians cannot back up from contending for biblical values.

To Tim Tebow and Chris Broussard the world may say “keep your faith to yourself.” But Christians say to them, “Tell me more, you big hero.”

“Why is it permissible for a sports talk show to talk about being a gay athlete and wrong for someone to point out the Bible calls that practice sin? If one is free to advocate for gays in the media, why is one not free to speak against the practice?”

Follow Bob Terry
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@drbobterry





"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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'Gruesome' result of abortion culture

Abortion opponents question effects of Gosnell case, media treatment

By **Sondra Washington**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Descriptions of a Philadelphia abortion clinic managed by Dr. Kermit Gosnell sound more like scenes from a horror movie than those of a medical clinic.

Yet abortion opponents are not completely optimistic about the case's effect on the overall fight for unborn lives, and the mainstream media may be part of the problem, they say.

Recently, 72-year-old Gosnell, who is a family doctor not an OB/GYN, was convicted of "first degree murder, involuntary manslaughter (for the death of one of his female patients), conspiracy, performing abortions at 24 or more weeks and other related charges." He was sentenced to three consecutive life sentences.

In a press release describing the conditions of Gosnell's West Philadelphia medical facility, Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams called Gosnell a "monster" and his practices "gruesome" and "heinous." (See story, this page.)

"I have seen a lot of senseless and cruel acts as the District Attorney of Philadelphia, but this case is arguably the most gruesome," Williams stated. "Any doctor who cuts into the necks severing the spinal cords of living, breathing babies, who would survive with proper medical attention, is a murderer and a monster. ... This doctor's illegal purposeful actions against the smallest and most vulnerable human beings born alive were properly called murder by our citizens."

Birmingham attorney Eric Johnston characterized Gosnell's sentencing as "an exceptional ruling (that) you don't see very often," but he feels the general media's lack of coverage of the situation limits the amount of attention it could draw to the pro-life cause.

"You would think that the mainstream media would report it, but it's very little coverage of it," Johnston told *The Alabama Baptist*. "What those convictions mean is recognition that something is wrong in an abortion clinic — that it's a bad place, that children are being killed there."

"The news media is not going to make a big deal out of it because they are sympathetic to the abortion cause. ... If a gunman goes into a school and kills children, they will always tell you how many children are killed ... They always look for that sympathy factor in the deaths of children. Yet when it comes to abortion, they turn away from it and turn their backs on the sympathy of it."

According to FoxNews.com, authorities were originally drawn to Gosnell's abortion clinic while investigating his "alleged prescription drug trafficking," which Williams said in-

cluded the "selling thousands of prescriptions to oxycontin and other narcotics."

A Baptist Press report notes, "The babies involved in the first-degree murder charges were only some of hundreds at least six months into gestation who were killed outside the womb after induced delivery at Gosnell's clinic, according to a 281-page grand jury report in 2011. Gosnell destroyed records for the others, the grand jury reported."

After his sentencing, many pro-life leaders announced their appreciation of the verdict.

"Care Net rejoices at the outcome of Gosnell's murder trial," Care Net President and CEO Roland Warren said in a news release. "A guilty verdict is a small step to ensuring justice for lives lost to abortion. However, the work we do is far from over."

There [are] still an estimated 3,500 lives lost every day to abortion in our nation, and abortionists like Gosnell are not an exception in the abortion industry."

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research and director of the Research Institute of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said he and others can breathe easier after Gosnell's conviction.

"I can understand the disgust that most Americans feel toward this man," he said. "I share it. Yet people like this were bound to emerge from the carnage of our abortion cul-

ture. We shouldn't be surprised that some of those who can do the unspeakable to a human being inside the womb would have no moral qualms over doing the same thing outside the womb.

"The abortion culture has subjugated the unborn to the interests of their mothers. If the mother doesn't want her baby, an abortionist like Kermit Gosnell feels no different about that baby before or after birth."

Johnston agreed. "What difference does it make to one of those abortionists if they kill a baby inside the womb or outside the womb?" he asked. "It's neither here nor there. ... They figure as long as it's inside the mother they can kill it with impunity."

Similar incidents in Alabama

Johnston believes this case should cause other cities with abortion clinics to look into those practices.

"It (this case) reveals what goes on in an abortion clinic and what has gone on there for years," he said. "We've had incidents like that in Alabama, and when they happen they are not reported by the local media."

"When the public doesn't get the information, [the case] doesn't have the impact it ought to have," he said. "If ... civilized people (looked at this case) objectively, they would say, 'If it happened there and we have had problems with women being injured in the past, isn't that enough to cause law enforcement to take a look at those places?'" ❏



GOSNELL

Horrors discovered inside Gosnell's clinic

On Feb. 18, 2010, a raid on Gosnell's office, called the Women's Medical Society, in West Philadelphia by the District Attorney's Office and the FBI uncovered the horrors inside. Law enforcement officers happened upon the medical abuses in the course of investigating tips that the doctor had been illegally selling thousands of prescriptions for oxycontin and other narcotics to "patients" that he never examined. The raid revealed that bags and bottles holding aborted fetuses were scattered throughout the building. Jars containing the severed feet of babies lined a shelf. Furniture and equipment was dusty, broken and blood-stained. The doctor himself was seldom present. In his absence, untrained and unsupervised workers, (one of them a teenage girl) routinely injected dangerous sedatives into women undergoing illegal late-term abortions.

A year long grand jury investigation revealed that, for over two decades, government health and licensing officials

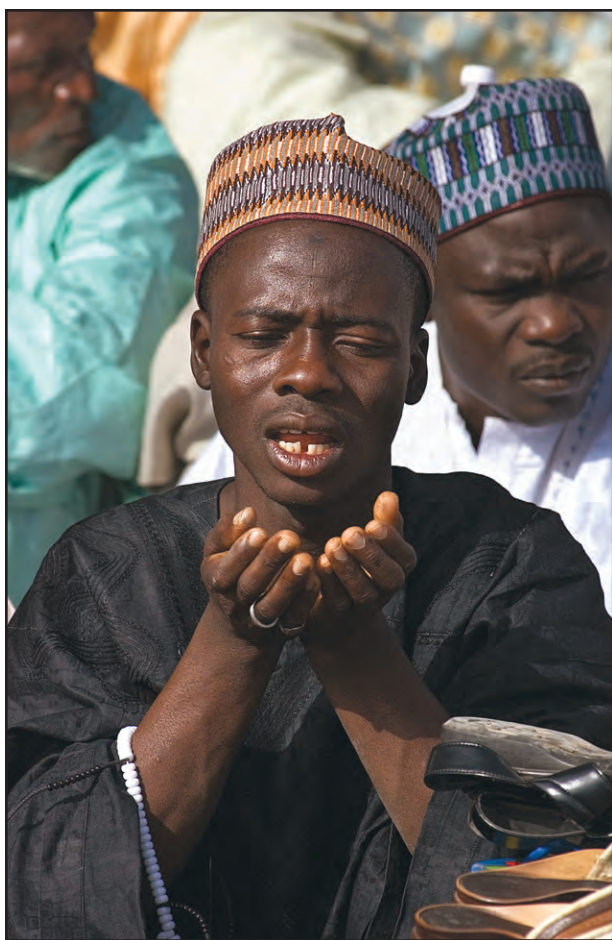
had received repeated reports about Gosnell's dangerous practices. No action was ever taken, however, even after the agencies learned that women had died during routine abortions under Gosnell's care.

Gosnell, a family practitioner who was never certified as an OB/GYN, operated the clinic for years primarily treating lower income, minority women. Along with performing abortions beyond the legal 24 weeks time, he also is accused of delivering and then killing healthy, viable babies; using a sliding pay scale to administer anesthesia; re-using unsanitary instruments; performing procedures in filthy rooms — some of the rooms had litter boxes and animals present at the time of the operations; and allowing unlicensed employees to perform operations and administer anesthesia."

Source: Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams,
<http://phillyda.wordpress.com>



Reuters photo



IMB photo

People stand (top photo) near burnt structures in the aftermath of what Nigerian authorities said was heavy fighting between security forces and Islamist militants in Baga, Nigeria. Muslim-Christian tension has existed for decades in the region, but in the past few years, extremists have escalated the situation to one of major violence.

Most lethal country

Nigeria home to world's worst attacks on Christians

The horror that gripped Baptists in 2009 when Pastor Fred Winters was shot in the pulpit, or in 1999 when a shooter opened fire on a youth group — that type of tragedy happens “weekly” in Nigeria, a Baptist leader said.

It is the most lethal country to live in if you are a Christian.

Seventy percent of the publicly reported Christian casualties worldwide in 2012 happened in Nigeria — more than Pakistan, Syria, Kenya and Egypt combined.

More than 900 Christians were reportedly targeted and killed for their faith last year.

“The reports are accurate, it’s just that the situation is even worse than what is being reported simply because [the media] can’t keep up with what’s going on,” said Jim Brighton, a Southern Baptist representative who lived in Nigeria for 14 years.

Problems have existed between Christians and Muslims

in the northern part of the country since the 1980s, Brighton said, but “what is happening now is different.”

In April 2011, in what was dubbed one of the “freest and fairest” elections in Nigeria’s recent history, Goodluck Jonathan — a Christian — was elected president. Before his victory was announced, violence erupted in the 12 northern states ruled by *sharia* (Islamic law).

The final toll for the Christian community was staggering.

“We trust God that ... the Lord will change their hearts and at the same time judge them rightly.”

Supo Ayokunle
 president, Nigerian Baptist Convention

“You can’t stop the gospel. The gospel is going to spread, and we have wonderful things happening in spite of all this — new believers out of Islamic groups and animistic groups numbering in the hundreds and thousands. We just need wisdom.”

Jim Brighton
Southern Baptist representative

In a 48-hour period, 764 church buildings were burned, 204 Christians were confirmed killed, more than 3,100 Christian-operated businesses, schools and shops were burned and more than 3,400 Christian homes were destroyed.

While there have been similar death tolls in certain incidents in terms of scope and coordinated scale of destruction, there has been no equivalent attack against the Church in recent decades, with the possible exception of government-backed genocides in Sudan.

And it wasn’t an isolated event, Brighton said — sweeping violence had happened before, it’s happened since and it will likely keep happening for a while.

“I do not see how this is going to be worked out,” he said, noting that he doesn’t think the military has the training to get the situation under control.

“The only thing that would help is if the Muslims of northern Nigeria rise up and put a stop to these people, because they know who they are and where to find them,” Brighton said. “Or it’s going to take the government partnering with local communities to do that. Right now I can’t see that happening.”

What’s happening right now is beheadings, shootings, rapes and mass destruction of property. In some places, people are too scared to sleep in their own homes, so they move into the cities to stay with others or camp at the top of rocks.

On May 14, Pastor Faye Pama Musa was killed by gunmen after Bible study.

The assailants reportedly followed him home from church, dragged him from his home and shot him outside in front of his daughter, who had followed them out pleading for his life.

At the end of April, gunmen charged into a church in Jilang Village in Maiha Local Government Area, opening fire as the pastor preached his sermon, according to the *Nigerian Tribune*.

Ten were left dead and 12 injured.

“These men just entered the church and started killing people without any justification. Blood is everywhere,” a source said.

A similar attack happened in January when men went on a shooting spree in the Christ Apostolic Church in Jimeta-Yola, the *Nigerian Tribune* reported. Nine churchgoers were killed.

There are many, many more examples.

Pastors have endured their churches being burned over and over in the last decade. In one case, police even watched as Christian

women were raped on church premises and did nothing.

For extremists, there “is no sense of right and wrong,” and so Christians become “convenient targets,” said Jackson Curry, an Alabama Baptist who served in Nigeria for 25 years.

“It is a challenging time for them,” Curry said. “We must pray for God’s protection, His strength and His grace to cover them, to lift them up to be the powerful witness in Nigeria that they can be.”

Baptists in Nigeria say they are thankful for the prayers.

“It is greatly encouraging to know that some people are praying for us, bearing with us the grief we are bearing for the weekly losses of our brothers and sisters to the attack of Islamic fundamentalists,” said Supo Ayokunle, president of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, in response to expressions of support from the Baptist World Alliance that promised prayer from Baptists worldwide.

“We trust God that ... the Lord will change their hearts and at the same time judge them rightly,” he said.

Morning Star News sources in the country credit the violence to

several factors — the organized brutality of terror group Boko Haram, street-level aggression from armed Muslim youth and government problems — for example, unemployment — that exacerbate the situation.

The violence is mainly toward Christians but not always, Brighton said.

“There was an incident [in mid-May] in which terrorists on motorcycles rode through a village shooting in all directions at whoever happened to be there,” he said. “Christian or Muslim or animist — those bullets don’t discriminate.”

‘Extraordinary measures’

News services have reported that an amnesty committee has been meeting to consider how to engage Boko Haram for a lasting solution, but no decision has been settled.

According to BBC, Boko Haram is attempting to overthrow the government and set up an Islamic state.

On April 13, President Jonathan declared a state of emergency in three northern states with an order for the military to use “extraordinary measures” to stop the violent rebellion, according to AllAfrica Global Media.

By the end of March, at least 128 people had been killed in northern Nigeria, mostly

Living as a Christian in Nigeria

▶ Nigeria is constitutionally a secular state with freedom of religion, but the northern ruling elite give preferential treatment to Muslims and discriminate against Christians.

▶ Little has been done to stem the growth of violent Islamist groups or to stop persecution of Christians in the north.

▶ In the face of persecution, Nigeria’s prayer movement is one of the world’s strongest, stimulated by political stresses, Muslim persecution of Christians and a genuine desire for revival and evangelization.

▶ The dynamic growth of the Church continues to be impressively solid.

▶ Missions vision was birthed in the 1970s through revival among university students. This vision has blossomed into a movement accounting for more than 5,000 Nigerian missionaries serving at home and abroad, helping lead the way for Africa-wide missions mobilization.

▶ Evangelicals have grown from 2.1 million in 1960 to 49 million in 2010.

Source: *Operation World*



IMB photo

Christians. And the number is climbing.

Peace is needed, but wisdom is needed even more, Brighton said.

“Pray for wisdom — don’t pray for protection,” he said. “Jesus never promised that we would always be protected, just that He would always be with us, whatever happened.”

‘Can’t stop the gospel’

Christian workers on the ground in Nigeria are having to make hard decisions about how to help people affected by the violence, Brighton said.

“We try not to cause seekers and new Christians persecution by having them publicly associated with us,” he said, noting that they let the believers choose when they want to be known openly as associated with Christian Westerners. “We try to keep a low profile.”

Workers and national believers need wisdom about where and when to go into different parts of the country, he said.

“It’s hit or miss. One day one part of town isn’t safe, and the next day it is, and a different part is dangerous,” Brighton said. “We have people in multiple locations trying to figure out how to help the new believers caught in the middle of all this.”

People are coming to Christ in the midst of all the violence, he said.

“You can’t stop the gospel. The gospel is going to spread, and we have wonderful things happening in spite of all this — new believers out of Islamic groups and animistic groups numbering in the hundreds and thousands,” he said. “We just need wisdom.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (Morning Star News, TAB)



IMB photo

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.

CAHABA

► **Ocmulgee Church, Selma**, will hold revival June 2-6, 7 p.m. nightly. Evangelist Daniel Wilson will speak and Frank Lombardo will lead worship music. A nursery will be available for children up to 24 months old. Danny Sumerlin is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Mount Gilead Church, Elba**, will hold an old-fashioned hamburger, hot dog and ice cream social May 27, 6 p.m. Fred Fowler is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **Jackson Memorial Church, Lafayette**, will celebrate its 64th homecoming June 23, 10:30 a.m. Dan Ireland, the church's first pastor, will lead the worship service. Lunch will follow at 11:30 a.m. and Bro. Billy Bob Bohannon will per-

form at 12:30 p.m. The church also will hold revival June 24-26, 6 p.m. nightly. Tommy Wilson will speak. For information call 334-703-7787. Jodie Robinson is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Chris Jones** is the new pastor of **Meadow Brook Church, Birmingham**. Jones previously



JONES

He and his wife, Ashley, have one daughter.

served as the church's youth pastor for two years. He holds a master of divinity degree from Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold a family night June 6, 6:30 p.m. following Vacation Bible School. For information call 256-729-1328 or visit clements baptist.org. Tim Anderson is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Corinth Church, Elrod**, will celebrate homecoming May 26, 10:30 a.m. Guest singers will be the Songs of Faith. Everyone is invited. Victor Bonner is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **First Church, Notasulga**, has called **Trey Kincer** as youth minister. He previously served as youth minister of Moon Lake Church, Mentone. He will be married in July and will begin attending Auburn University this fall. Tim Moore is pastor.

SU's Evening College offers fast path to degree

Community college graduates have the option of a new, fast path to a bachelor's degree, thanks to Evening College at Samford University in Birmingham.

The program will offer shorter terms and faster paths to graduation than was possible in its Adult Degree Program, which Evening College is replacing.

Evening College will offer two eight-week terms each fall and spring, one January Term and two five-week terms in the summer.

"Students who have already completed their associate degree and meet other admission requirements can finish their bachelor's degree in the evenings at Samford in less than two years," said Laura Tomlin, Evening College executive director. "All freshman and sophomore level credit from the Alabama Community College

System will transfer to Samford."

Evening College students at Samford enjoy a significantly reduced tuition rate, competitive with other degree completion programs in the area, Tomlin noted.

The new program will offer bachelor of arts and bachelor of sciences degrees, along with the paralegal certificate.

The new program is planning to offer new majors in 2013 and 2014.

This fall, Samford Evening College will start offering the bachelor of science with a major in youth studies, aimed at students interested in continuing their education at the graduate level in counseling, human services or education, or for students pursuing careers working with youth and adolescents in a social service, church-based, community service or education setting not requiring certification.

State Board elects Kennedy as associate for literacy missions

Kristy Kennedy, a member of First Baptist Church, Greenville, has been elected to serve as a state missionary in the office of Associational Missions and Church Planting (AM/CP) at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) effective June 1. She will be an associate for literacy missions and church and community ministries (CCM) in the state under AM/CP director Rick Barnhart.

Kennedy will work with ministries related to English as a Sec-

ond Language (ESL), adult reading and writing, tutoring children and youth, Deaf ministry and all aspects of CCM for Alabama Baptists.

Kennedy has a bachelor of arts in Spanish and a master of Hispanic studies from Auburn University. She currently serves as literacy missions strategist/ministry assistant in the AM/CP office.

Her promotion was approved by the SBOM executive committee May 16 in Montgomery. (TAB)



KENNEDY

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Peterson marks 40 years of music ministry

"Because of my tenure here, I've been able to become close to all the (church) members, not just those (serving) in the music ministry," said Dale Peterson, minister of music and composer in residence at Auburn First Baptist Church.

Peterson's tenure at the church will be celebrated June 23 as he marks 40 years of full-time ministry there. A drum major in high school, Peterson said his interest in the music ministry was cultivated when his church's music minister in Louisville, Ky., asked Peterson to serve as his substitute when needed.



PETERSON

Peterson earned a degree from Kentucky Southern College in Louisville, Ky., and completed his master's degree at College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati. When he graduated, his former music minister from Louisville had left the music minister role at Auburn First Baptist and gave the church Peterson's name as a replacement.

Along with serving as music minister, Peterson writes compositions and has more than

100 published anthems.

Church member Mark Wilson said Peterson "never stops" in his artistic creation and noted time-honored traditions Peterson has helped develop at Auburn First Baptist. For example, each year Peterson writes a song for Advent. Wilson said the church has not only a music minister but a "true artist."

Wilson recognizes the significance of Peterson's tenure and the impact his ministry has had on Auburn First Baptist. "Forty years anywhere in one particular place is important, but when I think about Dale's ministry ... he's giving his life to this church," Wilson said. "What a wonderful testimony to him and the church."

The church has invited back former members of the college choir for a 40th anniversary reunion May 24-26 with Peterson. Following rehearsals, the Reunion Choir will present a sacred concert that Sunday and the weekend will culminate with a church-wide dinner on the grounds.

Then on June 23, Auburn First Baptist will hold an anniversary celebration for Peterson's 40th year of ministry. He will be honored in the morning worship service, and a lunch with fellowship will follow. (Julie Payne)



By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Someone You Should Know

MITZI EAKER

The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham
Birmingham Baptist Association



EAKER

FAVORITE VERSE: Lamentations 3:24

FAVORITE HYMN: "The Solid Rock"

HOBBIES: Running and time with family

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Shane;
two sons (4 and 6 years old)

Mitzi Eaker served at national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) from 2002 to 2010, her last six years as children's resource team leader. She started Mitzi Jane Media (www.mitzijanemedia.com) to help small businesses, nonprofits and individuals understand how to use social media and create and implement online marketing strategies. She also has written two devotional books: "Missions Moments" and "Missions Moments 2."

Q: When and how were you led into your work as a social media strategist?

A: I started social media consulting as Mitzi Jane Media about a year ago. But it was (more than) seven years ago when I started moving the children's resource team at WMU to use social media to connect with churches and teachers. Social media networking and strategy planning are just the way God wired me. And today, God has opened up a door for me to share my understanding to help business owners and ministries.

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

A: I could not do this if it were not for my family's support. ... My

parents help with the kids. My husband is my copy editor, camera man, videographer and is currently learning how to be a soundman to help with podcasts.

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

A: I know that God is using the Strength Social Media Conference that I'm hosting ... to open doors for His glory. The beautiful thing about this is I go as a secular business owner and teach, but then they follow me on social media and I share my life with them. They see my faith story in real time.

In the line of duty

Below is a list of military chaplains who died while serving in the line of duty.

World War II:

▶ The “Four Chaplains”: Lt. George L. Fox (Methodist); Lt. Alexander D. Goode (Jewish); Lt. John P. Washington (Roman Catholic); and Lt. Clark V. Poling (Reformed Church in America) gave up their life jackets on the deck of the sinking USS *Dorchester* in the North Atlantic in 1943.

▶ Army Chaplain Lawrence Lynch (Roman Catholic): A member of New York’s “Fighting ’69th,” Lynch was killed while serving Communion under fire to a fatally wounded soldier on Okinawa in 1945, earning a posthumous Silver Star.

Korea:

▶ Army Chaplain Emil Kapaun (Roman Catholic) died in a POW camp in 1951 after ministering to fellow inmates. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and is a candidate for sainthood.

Vietnam:

▶ Army Maj. Charles Watters (Roman Catholic) was fatally wounded while ministering to fallen comrades under intense fire near Dak To in 1967, actions that earned him the Medal of Honor.

▶ Army Capt. Phillip Nichols was killed by a concealed explosive in 1970.

Iraq:

▶ Army Chaplain Maj. Henry Timothy Vakoc (Roman Catholic) was severely injured in a roadside bomb attack while returning from celebrating Mass with troops in 2004 and died from his wounds in 2009. He was awarded the Purple Heart.

Afghanistan:

▶ Army Chaplain Capt. Dale Goetz (Baptist) was killed en route to visit troops when his convoy came under attack in 2010, becoming the first chaplain to die in combat since 1970.

▶ Army Chaplain’s Assistant Staff Sgt. Christopher Stout was killed in an insurgent attack on his unit in 2010. (RNS)



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery

sxc.hu



RNS photo

Simulation software shows an animated figure moving carefully among the wounded, darting from one fallen figure to another. Trailing the combat medics, the uniformed military chaplain kneels and performs ‘spiritual triage,’ assessing who is dead, who is soon to die and who is likely to survive.

‘Serious-game’ software

Simulation puts chaplains through realistic scenarios but has limitations

(continued from page 1)

it raised the question: Can’t some of these skills be trained in a simulation environment when the stakes are not so high?”

By simply changing the uniform on a previously developed medic training simulation, Engineering & Computer Simulations Inc. is working on adapting the program for chaplains. The “serious-game” software will be designed to assist chaplains in navigating a “virtual battlefield” so they can decide how best to minister to those in need, some in the last moments of life.

As a first step, checking the dog tags of the fallen is important, said Zust, who is the training and operations chaplain for First Army at the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois, because “religious support in trauma begins with honoring the preferences of the soldier.”

Zust has high hopes for the computer program but acknowledges its limitations.

“We shouldn’t confuse simulation trainers as replacements for chaplains or care providers,” he said. “Trauma care and counseling need to be provided in person. There is no substitute for human contact in training.”

Navy Chaplain Josh Sherwin, 31, a rabbi who has deployed three times to Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan’s Helmand Province, agreed.

“There is no way a classroom environment can prepare you,” he said. “But a simulation that puts you through realistic situations can be highly valuable.”

Serving in two brutal wars, both without defined battle lines and plagued by sudden, explosive acts of violence, it is no surprise that some of those called to minister to those under fire are suffering from physical wounds, profound doubts and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Years after returning from Iraq, Roger Benimoff of Grand Prairie, Texas, wrote in *Guideposts* magazine that he still suffered from PTSD. Serving in combat zones for two tours, the Baptist pastor admitted to questioning where God was.

“Was He at work when men in my regiment were blown apart by roadside bombs? Killed by a grenade — while guarding a hospital?”

In addition to the computer simulation program under development in Orlando, there are other

tools available for military chaplains who may be required to serve in combat.

A 2010 documentary, “Chaplains Under Fire,” examines the roles of military clergy in Iraq and Afghanistan and the complexities inherent in their service. The film shows chaplains visiting with soldiers in forward operating bases, watching over them in field hospitals and meeting their flag-draped coffins when they are returned to the United States.

“It’s exhilarating to be in combat,” said Chaplain Bennett Sandford in the film, after escaping an improvised explosive attack unscathed. But before long, after praying over a slain Marine, the Baptist minister said, “the exhilaration went away.” (RNS)

“Trauma care and counseling need to be provided in person. There is no substitute for human contact in training.”

**Chaplain Jeff Zust
Army lieutenant colonel
and an EMT**



Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting *preview*

George R. Brown Convention Center

BP photo

SBC annual meeting set for June 11–12 in Houston

A Tuesday evening revival service with worship led by Charles Billingsley and a sermon by Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter will be among the highlights of the SBC annual meeting June 11–12 in Houston.

Messengers will convene with the theme “Revive Us That We May Be One,” based on John 13:34–35, at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

Luter chose the theme because he believes the brotherly love that distinguishes God’s disciples is the only way the convention will experience the revival it so desires. The theme passage commands Christians to love one another because such love is how the world will know that believers follow the Lord.

“We’re not going to do it by just our preaching or by our singing or just by our giving, we’ve got to prove it through our actions that we truly love one another,” Luter said. “And the way we do that is by being the disciples that God has called us to be.

“And if we ever get in one accord, I believe something can happen like (what) happened in Acts chapter 2,” Luter said. “When the

New Testament church was in one accord, God did great things through the church. And that’s my prayer for this convention.”

The SBC would be more Christlike in fulfilling its mission if the convention were to experience greater unity, Luter said.

Reports showing the level of success of the 1 percent Cooperative Program (CP) challenge, aimed at increasing CP funding by \$100 million within a year and extending the work of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the International Mission Board (IMB), also will highlight the annual meeting, Luter said.

A greater turnout and more ethnic diversity among messengers also are among Luter’s hopes for the meeting, and he looks forward to worship being led by Billingsley, this year’s convention music director and worship pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va.

Messengers to the annual meeting this year can stay up to date with an SBC annual meeting smartphone app, which will include more than a dozen features, including maps, alerts, the Book of Reports and the Daily Bulletin.

The free app is available for iPhone, iPad, Android and BlackBerry users and can be downloaded by visiting <http://m.core-apps.com/sbc2013am> from a smartphone or by typing in “SBC Annual Meeting 2013” in the smartphone’s app store.

► Pastors Conference: By strengthening the pastor and his family, Southern Baptist Pastors Conference President Gregg Matte wants to create a movement that could become the spark God uses to bring revival. Thus the theme of this year’s Pastors Conference: “Launch: Taking Our Hearts, Homes and Ministries to a Higher Place,” June 9–10 at the convention center.

► Hispanic pastors: Before the Pastors Conference, Hispanic pastors and church leaders are invited to “Avance Hispano” June 9. The conference will celebrate SBC Hispanic ministries and is co-sponsored by NAMB, GuideStone Financial Resources, LifeWay Christian Resources and the IMB.

► Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU): WMU will kick off a yearlong celebration of its 125th anniversary June 9–10 at the WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting. With the theme “The Story Lives On,” participants will get a glimpse into 125 years of missions history through theme interpretations and interactive exhibits. (BP)



LUTER

NAMB, IMB luncheons planned

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) hopes as many as 4,000 church leaders will attend its third annual Send North America luncheon as part of this year’s SBC Pastors Conference. The noon luncheon, with the theme “Building Vision and Celebrating Missions in North America,” will be June 10 in Hall B3.

To register for the free luncheon, visit snaluncheon.com. Tickets will be required for entry and the box lunch.

The International Mission Board will hold its luncheon, themed “The Last Full Measure of Devotion: Your Missions and Ministry Legacy,” June 11 at noon in the Hilton Americas Hotel.

The luncheon is free, but seating is limited and tickets are required. To register, call 804-219-1405, email leonnerley@imb.org or visit www.regonline.com/SBC_Luncheon. (BP, TAB)

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION ANNUAL MEETING

June 11–12 • George R. Brown Convention Center • Houston, Texas

Alabamians to serve

Alabama Baptists elected to serve during annual meeting, nominated for boards

Alabama Baptists will be among those serving during the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Houston, Texas.

► Chip Starnes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, and Derek Staples, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, will serve on the Committee on Committees.

The Committee on Committees will meet in Houston, just prior to the SBC annual meeting, June 11–12, to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations who, in turn, nominate trustees to serve on boards of the various entities of the SBC. SBC Bylaw 19 also provides that the Committee on Committees “shall nominate all special committees authorized during the sessions of the Convention not otherwise provided for.”

The Committee on Committees encompasses 70 members, two from each of the

35 state or regional conventions qualified for representation on boards of SBC entities.

SBC President Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, is responsible for naming the members of the Committee on Committees, as well as the members of the Credentials, Resolutions and Tellers committees.

Alabamians up for election

Alabama Baptists are also among those nominated to serve on the SBC Executive Committee (EC), the four denominational boards — International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources — the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting. Those nominated from Alabama are:

► Benjamin F. Kelley Jr., layperson and member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, to serve on the EC with term to expire in 2017.

► Trudie Beth Guffin, layperson and

member of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, to serve on LifeWay’s trustee board with term to expire in 2017.

► John C. Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, nominated for second term on the board of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

► Mark Hindman, layperson and member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, to serve on the board of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with term to expire in 2015.

► Donald E. (Don) Setser, member of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, nominated to serve a second term on the board of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

► William R.

(Bill) Morgan, director of missions for Autauga Baptist Association, to serve on the ERLC with term to expire in 2017.

At press time, Luter had not yet released the list of names of those appointed to serve on the Credentials Committee and the

Tellers Committee.

The Credentials Committee functions during the registration timeframe of the SBC annual meeting and works with participants attempting to register without all the proper credentials in place.

SBC Bylaw 8 notes the “president of the Convention, in consultation with the vice president, shall appoint, at least thirty (30) days before the annual session, a Credentials Committee to serve at the forthcoming sessions of the Convention.”

There is no time requirement for the appointment of the Tellers Committee, whose responsibility is to tabulate votes during the SBC annual meeting.

Luter indicated that he and registration secretary Jim Wells had been working closely together to compile a list of names for the two committees but had run into difficulties getting a “critical mass.” Roger “Sing” Oldham, vice president for SBC communications and relations, told *The Alabama Baptist*.

Oldham said he anticipated a full list of appointees to the committees to be made available on Baptist Press sometime this week. (BP, TAB)



BP photo

Hundreds of Southern Baptists will join the ‘Loving Houston’ launch by Houston’s Union Baptist Association for Crossover on June 8. Block parties, like this one pictured from last year’s Crossover New Orleans, will be among the various initiatives in the greater Houston area.

Crossover to assist ‘Loving Houston’

When Southern Baptists cooperate to reach people for Christ, it’s always effective, said Darrell Robinson, a former pastor and longtime evangelist from Texas.

Hundreds of Southern Baptists will arrive June 8 for Crossover Saturday the weekend leading up to the 2013 annual Southern Baptist Convention.

As in previous years, participants will help host block parties and special outreach events designed as opportunities to share the gospel.

This year Southern Baptists will have additional opportunities to share Christ through ministry evangelism as Crossover Saturday aligns with a local initiative to serve the city.

Houston’s Union Baptist Association is launching an initiative called “Loving Houston,” and a weeklong launch of the three-year initiative will culminate in a day of Crossover events involving Southern Baptists working alongside local churches as they serve

the city and share Christ.

“From the very beginning Crossover was designed to bless the city hosting the annual meeting,” said Al Gilbert, the North American Mission Board’s vice president for evangelism and executive director of LoveLoud. “Since Houston is one of the largest cities in the U.S. there is a need for many different kinds of opportunities for the people who live in Houston and for those who will be coming to town a day early.”

Tom Billings, executive director of the Union Baptist Association, said he hopes this will bring opportunities to share the love of Christ in words and deeds.

“We are doing this because we are Christ-followers. Jesus went about doing good and taught His followers to do the same,” Billings said. “By doing good we hope folks will ask, ‘Who are you and why are you doing this?’”

For more information on Crossover, visit www.namb.net/crossover. To join the Loving Houston outreach opportunities, visit www.lovinghouston.net. (BP)

Resolutions submission guidelines

How to submit a resolution for the SBC annual meeting:

► Proposed resolutions may be submitted no later than 15 days prior to the SBC annual meeting. Resolutions may not be submitted during the annual meeting.

► Proposed resolutions must be accompanied by a letter from a church qualified to send a messenger to the SBC annual meeting certifying that the individual submitting the resolution is a member in good standing.

► Proposed resolutions preferably should be submitted online at www.sbc.net/resolutions/introresolutions.asp or mailed to the Committee on Resolutions in care of the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203. The drafts must be typewritten, titled, dated and include complete contact information for the person and his or her church.

► No person will be allowed to submit more than three resolutions per year.

(BP)

Scientists clone human embryo for first time

The “brave new world” of human cloning apparently has arrived, and critics are waving the warning flags.

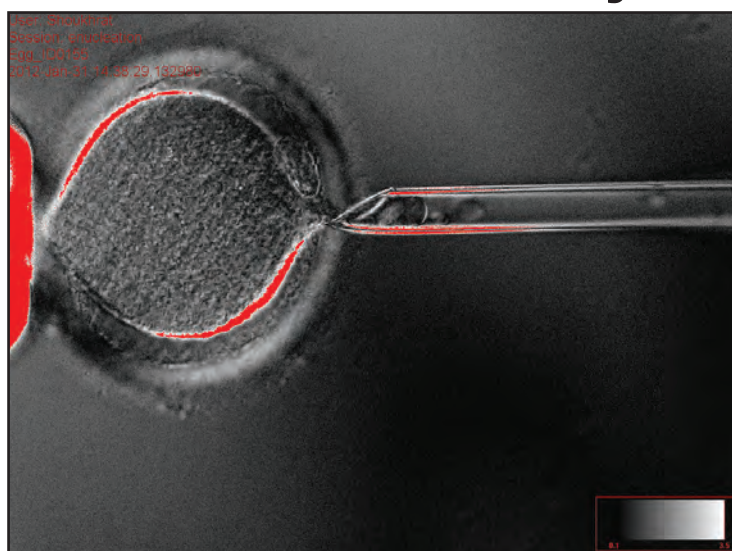
Oregon-based scientists reported May 15 they had cloned human embryos, reportedly the first successful attempt at such cloning, as a means of producing embryonic stem cells. The researchers extracted stem cells from the clones, destroying the days-old human embryos in the process.

The scientists used basically the same cloning method utilized in 1996 by Scottish researchers to create the first cloned mammal, Dolly the sheep.

News of the successful experiment seemed certain to revive the cloning controversy, which has been dormant in recent years. One of the battlegrounds likely will be in Congress, which could see new efforts to ban human cloning. Those efforts probably will involve debates on the extent of a prohibition — on cloning for reproductive purposes or for both research and reproductive purposes.

Critics — who point out cloning an embryo for experimentation is reproductive by nature because a new human being has been created — criticized the research announced in the journal *Cell* as both unethical and unnecessary. Supporters of the cloning technique sometimes call it “somatic cell nuclear transfer” — which simply is the scientific name for cloning.

“Let’s be clear — what these



‘BRAVE NEW WORLD’ — The extraction of a nucleus from an egg is one of the steps involved in cloning.

researchers are doing is creating a cloned human being in order to destroy that human being to harvest its stem cells for the benefit of older and bigger human beings,” said Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land. “There are words for such activity: barbaric and uncivilized.”

The technique used by scientists at Oregon Health and Science University and the Oregon National Primate Research Center was a version of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the method used to create Dolly. The researchers transferred the nucleus of a cell that contained a person’s DNA into an egg that no longer had its nucleus. After

stimulation, some of the embryos developed to a stage where they produced stem cells.

‘Morally wrong’

Daniel Sulmasy, a professor of medicine and a bioethicist at the University of Chicago, told National Public Radio, “This is a case in which one is deliberately setting out to create a human being for the sole purpose of destroying that human being. I’m of the school that thinks that that’s morally wrong no matter how much good could come of it.”

Opponents of cloning and embryonic stem cell research (ESCR),

which is lethal for the human embryos, pointed to other stem cell research that has surpassed ESCR in therapies in human beings and is not ethically controversial. Stem cells are the body’s master cells that can develop into other cells and tissues, giving hope for the development of cures for a variety of diseases and other ailments.

Research with adult stem cells in human trials has produced therapies for more than 70 afflictions, including cancer, juvenile diabetes, multiple sclerosis, heart damage, Parkinson’s and sickle cell anemia. Work with induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells also has shown promise. This technique reprograms adult skin cells into stem cells virtually identical to those in human embryos. Research with neither adult nor iPS stem cells involves the destruction of embryos.

ESCR — though highly touted because of the capacity of embryonic stem cells to transform into any cell or tissue in the body — has yet to treat any disease in human beings and has been plagued by the development of tumors in lab animals.

There is no federal prohibition on any form of human cloning. The House of Representatives passed legislation to ban cloning for research and reproductive purposes in 2001 and 2003, but the Senate never voted on a comprehensive ban. Some senators supported prohibiting cloning to produce a child but not cloning for research. (BP)

Want to know God?

Pastor Ricky Hall
Shiloh Baptist Church, Hartford

Many people have the idea that as long as they are “good enough,” they will be able to enter heaven. We measure God’s holiness with our morals and good deeds. When we do this we misunderstand God’s salvation. It is possible for a person to be well liked and admired in the community and not spend an eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ. It is also possible for someone to have acquired a great amount of wealth on earth but be spiritually bankrupt.

This issue was addressed by Jesus in Luke 18:18–23, which says, “A ruler questioned Him, saying, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.’” And he said, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth.’ When Jesus heard this, He said to him, ‘One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.”

This young ruler was probably a local judge or councilman within this small town. He had grown up in this area and was well respected by everyone. We know from what God’s Word says that he had grown up in a home that respected God. His parents taught him to keep all the commandments and it was instilled in him that he should be a “good person.” But there was still one thing holding him back — he loved his worldly possessions. The rich young ruler was more concerned with storing up treasures here on earth than in heaven. Jesus gave him an opportunity for salvation, but he chose to walk away.

What about you? Are you guilty of putting possessions ahead of Jesus Christ? Are you a “good person” that has never asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins? It is impossible to secure your place in heaven without asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior. He is waiting.

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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 resumés 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 resumés to: JeanAngel@charter.net, or mail: 5680 Bay Village Drive, Athens, AL 35611. Job description available upon request.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR: Church seeking a called bivocational youth pastor. Send resumé to: Calvary Baptist, 7570 15th Street Road, Concord, AL 35023, ATTN: Roger or boazroger@ymail.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Nazareth Baptist Church, Rainsville, Ala., is seeking a part-time youth minister. Job description available upon request. Please submit resumés to: Nazareth Baptist Church, P.O. Box 541, Rainsville, AL 35986.

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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 resumé to: jobs@harvest-baptist.org.

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

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About Alabama

Evaluating Alabama's Economic Progress

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Alabama trailed all but four states in employment growth during 2012, according to data recently released by the U.S. Department of Labor. Federal statistics also show that the number of Alabamians employed in 2012 was 5 percent lower than in 2007, the peak year before the "Great Recession" of 2008–2009. Only three other states had worse records over this six-year period.

Jobs and personal income are the key indicators of a state's economic performance, and Alabama's governors traditionally pay great attention to them. Often they rate their performance by citing the number of jobs announced in economic development projects, but growth in total employment and personal income per capita are much better indications of the state's actual progress.

These negative employment results have captured current attention, but it is important to place them in context. Are there bright spots in the state's employment picture, and where might attention be focused to create improvements?

Alabama's job-creating performance in the years leading up to the Great Recession was perhaps the best the state has known. In 2007, our unemployment rate was lower than that of all but 10 other states, and employment peaked in total and as a percent of the state's population. Thus, 2012 employment is being compared with stellar results from the pre-recession

period. In some ways that momentum continues: for example, Alabama's unemployment rate has remained at or below the national average in all but three of the past 37 months.

The most recent employment data from the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations indicate monthly job growth, but the longer-term picture continues to reflect mixed results for the recovery period.

Employment picture

Statewide employment in April 2013 was about 43,600 or 2.3 percent lower than in April 2007. Construction employment was down by more than 33,000 or 30 percent; manufacturing jobs were off by almost 49,000 or 17 percent; and retail and wholesale jobs were down by about 24,000. On the other hand, jobs in healthcare and social assistance were up by more than 15,000 or 8 percent, and government employment by 16,400 or 4.5 percent.

The employment picture is much better in Alabama's larger urban areas, home to about two-thirds of the state's jobs, than in the more rural parts of the state. PARCA calculations indicate that the state's "metropolitan" counties had a 6.4 percent unemployment rate in 2012, compared to 9.7 percent in the remaining counties.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

Developing a BIBLICAL worldview



RA membership may grow if Boy Scouts change

They have pledges. They have merit badges. And they may go camping.

But they're not the Boy Scouts.

Across the country, there are decades-old religious alternatives with names like Royal Ambassadors (Southern Baptist), Pathfinders (Seventh-day Adventist) and

Royal Rangers (Assemblies of God).

And as the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) considers whether to change its membership policy to admit gay members (but continue its ban on gay leaders), some of these groups are fielding inquiries from people concerned about the action the BSA may take.

The Assemblies of God offices in Springfield, Mo., have received many calls in the last few months about the Royal Rangers program. "The inquiries come in waves, increasing each time a new report on the topic releases," the denomination said.

Dick Broene, executive director of the Calvinist Cadet Corps (CCC), said his evangelical organization heard from Scout leaders who had considered leaving the BSA when it appeared the group might approve including gay leaders. The CCC includes Bible lessons in weekly meetings and connects merit badges to Scripture.

"We are very similar in many ways, with the merit badges and rank advancement, uniforms and emphasis on camping," said Broene, whose organization drew 1,200 participants to a 2011 triennial camporee in Michigan. "The difference is we have Christ at the heart of everything we do."

For Southern Baptists, the Royal Ambassadors (RAs) missions-focused program for elementary school boys is hosted in about 3,000 churches. Some Southern Baptist churches also have Boy Scout troops.

Steve Heartsill, managing editor of the RA curriculum, said there has been "some uptick in phone calls" as the BSA policy vote approached (set to take place during the group's annual meeting May 22–24).

Founded in 1908 and operated by the national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), RAs espouse "many of the same virtues and character-building activities that are found in Boy Scouts but with the added benefit ... that our primary goal is developing boys into men who understand the mission of God and carry the gospel with them into the world," said Richard Bodenhamer, a WMU marketing specialist.

The RA pledge is this: "As a Royal Ambassador I will do my best to become a well-informed, respon-

sible follower of Christ; to have a Christlike concern for all people; to learn how to carry the message of Christ around the world; to work with others in sharing Christ; and to keep myself clean and healthy in mind and body."

Boys in RAs participate in fun activities that are appropriate for boys their age, said Wanda Lee, WMU executive director, noting the curriculum helps nurture their mental, social, physical and spiritual development.

"At a young age, boys learn that life isn't all about them as they develop a biblical worldview by actively serving others and learning how God is at work through missions efforts around the world," Lee said. "WMU believes in a man's calling to influence and lead boys in missions education. More than ever, boys desperately need male Christian role models who live out the gospel."

Based on subscriptions to *RA Leader* magazine, WMU estimates there are 6,300 RA leaders, and 31,000 subscriptions to *RA World*, the magazine for RA members, indicate there are at least that many boys involved in RAs.

The RA membership number may grow if Scout-affiliated church groups pull out of the BSA, as discussed on OnMyHonor.net, a new organization spearheading efforts to oppose the BSA policy change.

"That relationship is at risk, as is the future of one of the last nonreligious institutions that has not yielded to political correctness," said a narrator of a May 5 simulcast on the topic, which was hosted by the Family Research Council. Religious groups charter 70 percent of the Scout-sponsoring organizations.

Potential membership loss

Boy Scouts officials are aware of the potential effect of a gay-related policy change on their local religious units. According to an executive summary on the BSA website, a change in the youth membership policy "would be consistent with the religious beliefs of the BSA's major chartered organizations." A policy change about both leaders and members could cause "membership losses in a range from 100,000 to 350,000."

R. Chip Turner, national chairman of the BSA's Religious Relationships Task Force, said he's grateful the Scouts delayed the process about a potential policy change. Now it's a matter of prayer, he said. "I have asked several task force members from various faith groups to lead us in a season of prayer for divine guidance in the voting process." (RNS, BP)



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'Ready to lead'

US Sen. Sessions challenges UMobile graduates

U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions encouraged University of Mobile (UMobile) graduates to stand for truth, work hard, live responsibly and be leaders in their families, communities and country, during his commencement address at the university's 47th graduation ceremony May 11.

Sessions, R-Ala., was awarded the honorary doctor of laws and approximately 370 students received associate, bachelor's and master's degrees at the ceremony at the Mobile Civic Center.

Sessions told graduates he has "supreme" confidence in their future.

"You all have the mind and the faith to weather the obstacles that face each one of us. And as you work to build this future for yourselves and for your country, I hope you will build it on the foundation of the fundamental ideals that have made this nation so exceptional," he said.

Among those ideals is a commitment to truth, he said.

"In a post-modern, post-religious world — a world that you may be now entering — one of the first casualties is respect for truth. I feel it every day in Washington. Our entire constitutional, political and judicial heritage is designed to discover truth and then to follow it," Sessions said.

"You were raised right, you have been well educated, and you are ready to lead at this critical time in our nation's history," he said. "You will need to be engaged in this battle for truth in the years to come. I don't see how our government can function if current secular trends lead to a collapse in belief in objective truth.

"By living with goodness and decency and honor, you will strengthen America. Each generation in America has been handed from their fathers and mothers a legacy of freedom, justice and opportunity. It is now on your shoulders to safeguard that birthright, to build on it and to pass it on to the next generation of sons and daughters."

UMobile President Mark Foley reminded graduates "what was said to each of these men and women since they came to the University of Mobile was, 'go change the world.' I am looking forward to seeing how you do that world-changing in the days ahead."

Retiring Professor of Christian Ministries Cecil Taylor carried the university's ceremonial mace and led faculty and graduates into the civic center. Taylor, who has served as dean of the School of Christian Ministries and founded the University Missions program, gave the benediction.

Several awards also were presented.

The William K. Weaver Jr. Excellence Award and the Annie Boyd Parker Weaver Excellence Award were presented to

the outstanding male and female students selected by vote of the university faculty. Both awards are presented to graduates who exemplify the mission of the university and selection is based on scholarship, Christian character, leadership and service. Receiving these highest recognitions possible for UMobile seniors were Sara Mi-

chele Dye, of Huntsville, and William Dorminy, of Dothan.

Other academic awards were presented during Honors Day Convocation on May 10 at Ram Hall on campus.

And the Shofar Award for faithful service by an Alabama Baptist minister was presented to Jerry Boyd, pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church, Jasper.

Boyd was born March 19, 1941, in Jasper. He was baptized in July of 1959 and ordained in 1974. He started Maranatha Baptist in December 1976 and continues to serve as bivocational pastor.

Throughout the Walker Baptist Association, he is known as a humble servant leader with a Christlike spirit who loves the people he serves unconditionally. Boyd helped launch the Bread of Life Soup Kitchen and helped facilitate a tutoring school through a partnership with First Baptist Church, Jasper, and a local school in west Jasper.

Faithful example

Much of the funding for the church's various ministries has come directly from his pocket. He works tirelessly for his congregation and community, not only feeding people spiritually but also feeding and clothing the needy. By his faithful example, he has inspired many other congregations in the county to join him in ministering to those who need it most. (UMobile)



SESSIONS



Henagar Baptist Church celebrates centennial

Henagar Baptist Church in Sand Mountain Baptist Association celebrated its centennial April 28.

During the morning worship service, Herman Pair, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sandusky, in Birmingham and president of Herman Pair Ministries, who was ordained at Henagar Baptist in 1971, spoke to the congregation. The church's history was read by member Alan Wilks, and that historical information also was compiled into a program and shared with everyone.

Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Baptist Association, presented a plaque to the church on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

"We just had a wonderful time that morning," Pastor David Hairston said, noting that former pastor Randall Lyles was in attendance and Gold City Quartet performed special music for the day.

Following the service, the church continued the festivities with a covered-dish lunch. Hairston said there were more than 300 people at the church for the anniversary celebration.

Looking to the vision of Henagar Baptist's future, Hairston said, "It's always to grow and become more missions-minded" and to continue on the route that the church has taken in the past. "We've always been very missions-minded here and want to continue to look forward to doing missions and reaching out to our community," he noted. (Julie Payne)

Opp's Blue Springs Baptist marks 75 years

"It was one of the best services I've been a part of in a long, long time," said Pastor Randy Bradshaw of his church's 75th anniversary April 28.



The church, Blue Springs Baptist, Opp, celebrated with a worship service that kicked off with special music from several people, including deacon Bobby Jackson's son, Matthew.

Virginia Stephenson, a representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, was on hand to present the Covington Baptist Association church with a plaque, and former pastor Joey Williams spoke on "It is Well With My Soul."

Bradshaw noted about 200 people were in attendance for the special day and a lunch followed the service.

"(We) had a good day, good fellowship," he said, adding several former members also were in attendance.

Bradshaw said a hailstorm that swept through the area a couple years ago severely damaged the church. Blue Springs Baptist built a new building, and Bradshaw said the congregation has been worshipping in that building for a year. "We have a vision to fill that place up with the power of God," he said. (Julie Payne)

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The church's WAISTLINE

Alabama Baptists can 'be responsible,' fight health issues

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist churches sit right in the buckle of the Bible Belt. And that belt is a lot bigger than it should be, Rondie Wilks said. "Next to the other addictions that we preach and teach about — alcohol, pornography, drugs — people see gluttony as much more acceptable in our part of the world," said Wilks, a fitness trainer and life coach. But food is an addiction too, she said, and that's especially evident in Alabama and Mississippi, the two fattest states in the nation.

"According to God's standards, He wants us to discipline ourselves," Wilks said.

But that's something that's hard for Baptists sometimes, with pastors living stressed-out lives and with doughnuts and casseroles everywhere, she said.

"Our churches aren't healthy," said Wilks, whose husband, Bill, is pastor of Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville. "As believers, we should be the healthiest, happiest people in the world, because we know Who we belong to, Who made us. We should be responsible to be healthy."

But instead, Baptists are often overweight and have all sorts of health issues, she said.

Researchers at Northwestern University said people who attended church or a church-related activity at least once a week were twice as likely to become obese than someone who didn't go to church, according to *Time Magazine*.

This might be because people with church involvement have more relationships, thus getting together with people more often to eat, researchers said.

But Ken Ferraro, a professor of sociology at Purdue University, said that from his studies of church weight problems, it could be other things, too.

"It may be that religious affiliation contributes to weight gain, or it may be that people who are overweight seek comfort and companionship in the church," Ferraro said, according to the *Anniston Star*.

Whatever the key reason, Baptists are the heaviest group with a 30 percent obesity rate, he said, noting that the data studied was from all Baptist groups (Southern Baptists, National Baptists, etc.).

Baptists have problems

Based on that research, Baptists have problems, said Dr. Scott Stoll, chairman of the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Coordinated Health. "At the church level, pastors and clergy are burdened by the skyrocketing number of their members with chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease and confess that a growing and disproportionate amount (of) their time is spent caring for their ill members and less time spent in study, discipleship and evangelism," Stoll said on Fox News' website.

Some churches are finding that the lack of physical stewardship is also affecting their financial stewardship as staff insurance premiums go up, he said.

What's the solution? The Church is, he said. "The intrinsic community and power of small groups are catalytic sources for change that can fuel grassroots movements," Stoll said. "Couple that with solid faith-based teachings on health, stewardship and a return to foods provided by their Creator and the church could quickly reverse the obesity trend and serve as a positive influence and resource to surrounding communities."

Wilks said she couldn't agree more. She runs a training program called LivingFit that provides eating plans, workouts and devotionals. At her church, small groups participate in it together, an effort called DiscipleFit.

'We need programs'

"I just think we don't educate people on taking care of themselves — body, mind and spirit," Wilks said. "We need programs. We need small groups. Putting things like that in place is very important."

In 2010, the Alabama Baptist State Convention passed a resolution on physical health that called for state Baptists to repent of overeating and practice moderation as they eat.

But past that, there's no accountability, Wilks said. Other denominations, such as the Methodists, have things in place to help, but Baptists don't.

When DiscipleFit groups meet at Northpark, they study the Bible, hold each other accountable and then work out together, Wilks said.

"Don't make excuses, make changes. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit," she said. "We simply feed people God's word, and God's word is what does the transformation."

It's simple, Wilks said — God made it that way.

"If God made it, we eat it. Put God-made foods in your God-made body," she said. "We talk about a lot of other things in church, but we don't talk about our bodies as the temple of God and taking care of them."

Wilks said she wants the Church to get it and pastors to get it.

"I'm passionate about this, because I'm a pastor's wife

Taking steps

Sunday morning doughnuts?

▶ Stop feeding people doughnuts at church and let people eat before they come. We have conditioned ourselves that we have to have food at all church functions. We don't have to. People find a way to take care of their real hunger.

▶ Doughnuts have absolutely nothing that your God-made body can use to be healthy — they can pack about 600 calories of pure fat.

▶ God made plenty of foods for us to enjoy. Try healthy protein bars, small packages of nuts or fruit instead.

Making midweek meals more healthy?

▶ Choose God-made foods for the meal.
▶ Always combine carbohydrates and proteins along with vegetables. Provide a lean protein with a larger portion of vegetables and a small portion of a healthy carbohydrate like baked sweet potato waffle fries.

▶ Make a salad bar available.
▶ Try to stay away from casseroles and heavy creams, sauces and dressings — they add a lot of fat and unwanted calories.

Snacks for sports groups?

▶ Sports groups will be spending lots of calories, so high carbohydrates is what your body needs for fuel and energy. Fruit or whole grain granola bars could be a good choice.

Source: Rondie Wilks, livingfitonline.com

and I know the kind of lifestyle he leads. It's stressful. It's demanding. You have to take time out for yourself to be healthy," she said.

Because of the growing obesity rate among pastors, hypertension and depression have risen and life expectancy has fallen, Wilks said. "It's really important. I love my husband, and I want him to be around a very long time."

She said she wants the same for the rest of Alabama's pastors and church members, too.

For more information about LivingFit or DiscipleFit, visit livingfitonline.com. ☞



Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

Lawsuit still stands against Calif. Baptist University

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — California Baptist University lost a bid to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a transgender former student expelled after revealing on MTV's "True Life" that she is biologically male.

Domaine Javier, 26, filed a lawsuit Feb. 25 accusing the private Christian school affiliated with the California Southern Baptist Convention of breach of contract and violation of state anti-discrimination laws.

The university claims as a private institution based on religious beliefs, it is not covered by a state law that bars discrimination based on gender identity.

The Riverside, Calif., *Press-Enterprise* reported May 7 that Riverside County Superior Court Judge Matthew Perantoni refused to dismiss the case, however, allowing it to move forward.

The university contends that Javier lied on an admission application by indicating she is female. She said she was being truthful, because she has viewed herself that way since childhood.

The 6,000-student university started in 1950 describes its mission as "providing a Christ-centered educational experience that integrates academics with spiritual and social development opportunities" and challenging graduates "to become individuals whose skills, integrity and sense of purpose glorify God and distinguish them in the workplace and in the world."

BWAid director Chhangte honored for work

WASHINGTON — Rothangliana Chhangte, director of Baptist World Aid (BWAid), the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), is the 2013 recipient of the Luke Mowbray Ecumenical Award. The award gives recognition to an American Baptist Church USA (ABCUSA) member who has made outstanding contribution in ecumenical work at the local, state, national or international level.

Chhangte, prior to joining the BWA staff Aug. 1, 2012, served ABCUSA as ecumenical officer where she represented that body on the central committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian Churches Together, the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC) and the BWA.

As a representative to the WCC while at ABCUSA, Chhangte was instrumental in the implementation of the Decade to Overcome Violence in the United States. She was involved in reviving and supporting youth and young adult participation in WCC events in the U.S. She served on the executive committee of the NCC where she made significant contributions to the functioning of the council and its emphasis on justice and as co-chair of the NCC Interfaith Commission.

Vote to retain Virginia church brings backlash

RICHMOND, Va. — A Virginia Baptist association's March vote not to oust a church for ordaining a gay minister has prompted a number of members to leave or consider doing so, renewing suggestions that the congregation at the center of the controversy should voluntarily withdraw for the good of the whole.

About a quarter of Richmond Baptist Association's (RBA) churches have either ended ties (69) or threatened to leave (11) in the seven weeks since messengers narrowly voted to retain the membership of Ginter Park Baptist Church.

Last September, Ginter Park Baptist ordained Brandon Scott McGuire, a gay church member who feels called to minister to persons with disabilities and special needs and to their families.

The Baptist General Association of Virginia severed ties with the nearly century-old church in November 2012. But at a called meeting March 19, after more than an hour of discussion, the local association voted 176-158 to endorse a committee's recommendation to "embrace Ginter Park Baptist Church as a sister church" without endorsing its views on homosexuality.

British Baptists elect first female as general secretary

DIDCOT, England — Forty-eight-year-old Lynn Green was elected May 4 as general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). The first woman to hold the post, she replaces Jonathan Edwards, who steps down in July after seven years. Green assumes office in September.

Green currently serves as regional minister for the Southern Counties Baptist Association, a family of about 150 Baptist churches and one of 13 regional associations that together with 2,150 local churches and six colleges make up the BUGB, Britain's fourth-largest Christian denomination.

'Desperate need for Jesus'

Recording artist Needham's latest album focuses on repentance

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For Christian recording artist Jimmy Needham, "Clear the Stage" is more than just the title of his latest album. It's a reminder and challenge to make sure personal ambitions are not taking precedence over the Lord.

"This album tackles some tough issues and gives people truths to think about, wrestle with and ultimately lead to repentance by bringing their focus back to Jesus," Needham said. "It was very personal and challenging writing these songs — admitting the idols in my life that have stood in place of Jesus. These things were not intended to be the center of my affections, but I chose to chase after them instead of the Lord.

"Anything that we put in place of Jesus is an idol, even if it's a good thing like family or work. We have missed the mark and succumbed to pressures of society if we allow anything to be treated more important than Jesus.

"I hope these songs will encourage people to find, identify and remove those idols and remember that Christ needs to be their top priority. We serve a gracious and glorious God, who deserves our attention and adoration."

As Needham travels across the country, he maintains a busy schedule performing concerts and leading worship for various ministry events. He especially enjoys ministering to youth and college students because of the critical influence these years present.

"I never heard the gospel until I was a sophomore in high school," Needham said. "A friend took the time to share what it meant to have Jesus as your Savior. It was then that God opened my eyes to His truth, and I've been walking with Christ ever since."

"I hope these songs will encourage people to find, identify and remove those idols and remember that Christ needs to be their top priority."

Jimmy Needham
Christian recording artist

After graduating from Texas A&M University, Needham planned to become a history teacher. However, after receiving a phone call from Inpop Records, Needham felt the Lord leading him to share the gospel through songs.

"God totally changed the plans and the direction where I was heading," Needham said. "I'm incredibly grateful for what God has done and His faithfulness.

"Today, I'm more aware of my desperate need for Jesus in everything that I do and in every circumstance that's thrown my way. That's why I really want people to realize a relationship with Jesus is so satisfying and fulfilling. Every other pursuit or effort trying to make our lives better seems dull compared to life in His presence." ❧



Photo courtesy of Inpop Records

Staying focused

Los Angeles Clippers center Jordan presses forward with faith

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Although he is almost 7 feet tall, there is something that DeAndre Jordan doesn't plan to outgrow: Cartoons.

"I watch a lot of cartoons," said Jordan, the 6-foot-11-inch, 265-pound center for the Los Angeles Clippers.

He also has become one. After a March 10 "Dunk of the Year" over the Detroit Pistons' Brandon Knight, Under Armour launched a "Show Me Your Dunk Face" T-shirt that had a cartoon drawing of Jordan dunking.

Tuning in to "toons" is one way that Jordan, 24, relaxes during a demanding NBA season.

Averaging 8.7 points a game and 7.1 rebounds per game (through mid-April), Jordan has set a Clippers franchise record with 151 consecutive starts at center, which is the longest active streak in the NBA. He ranks fourth in the NBA in dunks with 171.

This season, Jordan has helped lead the Clippers to their first Pacific Division title in the franchise's 43-year history.

"We know what we are capable of, and we know where we get our talent from," Jordan said. "I know I wouldn't have a lot of great things, having this job that I love, without my Lord and Savior. I'm thankful for that every day."

Born in Houston, Texas, Jordan was led to Christ by his grandmother Cora Anderson.

"I've always been on the right path," Jordan said.

But it wasn't until the later years of attending Christian Life Center Academy in Humble, Texas, that Jordan's salvation experience "really hit" him.

As a senior at Christian Life, Jordan averaged 26.1 points, 15.2 rebounds and 8.1 blocks. He was a PARADE All-American and was twice all-state. Rivals.com rated him as the No. 8 overall prospect in the nation, second top prospect at center and the No. 1 prep player in Texas.

Jordan's field goal percentage prowess was evident during his freshman year at Texas A&M. He shot a team-high .617 while averaging 20 points per game and was on the Big 12 All-Rookie Team. The Clippers drafted him 35th overall in the 2008 NBA Draft.

At his home in Los Angeles, he keeps a cross that his grandmother gave him that has the "Serenity

Prayer" inscribed: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

"I pray a lot," Jordan said. "My faith has grown tremendously. I try to stay positive knowing that I can't control a lot of things. I just control things I can and let everything else happen."

Jordan uses his upbeat personality to bring levity to the team.

"I'm happy all the time," he said. "Even if we do lose, I try to find something positive out of it that can keep us going. I want to be the best person I can be on and off the court and just be devoted."

He said that his faith is "not something that I go out preaching every day, but I know my relationship with Christ, and I know what He has done for me, and that is what I live on."

For Grant Hill, a Clippers forward, the 2012-13 season has been "tough" because of injuries and "going through a lot of stuff." He said that Jordan has made him feel comfortable and made him "feel involved."

"For that I will be forever grateful," Hill said. "He is a good guy. He has got a good sense of what is right and wrong."

Clippers center Ronny Turiaf said Jordan "is a very genuine person that cares about his teammates. We are very fortunate to have him on our team. He is one of my best friends on the team."

Clippers rookie guard Maalik Wayns and Jordan make a point to pray before every meal.

"We get on to each other about it," Wayns said.

Jordan's field goal percentage of .641 is the league's best. During March, he had the best shooting month of any player in the NBA during the last 28 years when

he shot 84.6 percent. He had an NBA season-high of 20 straight field goals in March. Jordan leads the Clippers in offensive rebounds with 201 and is 19th in the league in blocks with 104, a 1.32 per-game average.

"He is a young guy who has got a lot of potential," Hill said. "He has worked extremely hard."

While there have not been "huge, dramatic" turning points in his life, Jordan said his faith does encounter a full-court press.

"With the territory of my job, there are so many temptations, whether it's partying [or] women," he said. "I just try to keep my head on straight and stay focused." ❧



Photo by Andrew D. Bernstein/NBAE via Getty Images
DeAndre Jordan

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Online gambling experiences 'watershed moment'

LAS VEGAS — Online gambling got a big boost May 1 as Nevada became the first state to allow real-money Internet gambling with the launch of a Las Vegas-based online poker site.

Observers called the opening day at UltimatePoker.com "a watershed moment for gaming," *USA Today* said, and the company's chairman said rather than competing for business in traditional poker rooms, the online option "will only grow new business."

The target audience is the 21- to 45-year-old male who "embraces technology" and has disposable income, the newspaper said. Online poker will be available at all hours, and guidelines say players must be at least 21 and physically within state lines. Poker games will be played on personal computers, *USA Today* said, from accounts funded by MasterCard, checks or wire transfers.

Southern Baptist ethicist Barrett Duke said this demonstrates the gambling industry's lust for money knows no boundaries. "Our churches will need to prepare their members to understand the dangers involved with gambling and to watch for these additional problems among their family members," said Duke, vice president for public policy and research at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Many states are looking to add online gambling. It's going to get really bad if we can't rein it in."

Groups aim to block FCC from allowing indecency

WASHINGTON — Leaders of 80 state and national groups concerned with morality have endorsed a letter asking Congress to block the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from weakening the enforcement of the broadcast decency law.

The Parents Television Council (PTC) and Morality in Media drafted the letter asking key Congressional committees to oppose the FCC's effort to allow television and radio stations to broadcast before 10 p.m. Eastern the type of nudity and/or expletives normally reserved for cable TV, said Dan Isett, PTC director of public policy. Among the signers is Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The FCC is considering permitting "isolated expletives" and isolated "non-sexual nudity" on broadcast TV, something that currently could draw a fine. The letter urges Congress to make sure the FCC takes "seriously its duty to enforce federal law 18 U.S.C. 1464, limiting indecency and profanity on the publicly owned airwaves to times of day when children are much less likely to be in the audience. To comment, log onto the FCC's electronic comment filing system website, <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/>, click on "submit a filing" and type proceeding number 13-86 where prompted.

Minnesota 12th state to legalize gay 'marriage'

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minnesota became the 12th state to legalize gay "marriage" May 14, continuing a trend that has seen the number of states that have redefined marriage double within the past year. Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton, a Democrat, signed the bill May 14, one day after it passed the state Senate, 37-30. It had passed the state House, 75-59. Delaware and Rhode Island also approved gay "marriage" this year after voters in Washington state, Maine and Maryland OK'd gay "marriage" laws last year.

Passage of the Minnesota bill was particularly discouraging for traditional groups because a constitutional marriage amendment — which would have defined marriage as between one man and one woman — was defeated by voters November 2012, 52-48. If it had passed, gay "marriage" could not have been legalized. Minnesota would have joined 30 states that have similar constitutional amendments. The bill will take effect Aug. 1.

Christian philosopher, author Willard dies at 77

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif. — Dallas Willard, Christian philosopher and author, died May 8 in Woodland Hills, Calif., from cancer. He was 77. Willard is best known for his work on Christian spiritual formation, which he described as "the process of establishing the character of Christ in the person" in a *Christianity Today* interview in 2005. Willard also had taught philosophy at the University of Southern California since 1965 and headed the philosophy department there from 1982-85.

His Christian thinking led to books like "The Spirit of the Disciplines," "The Divine Conspiracy" and "Renovation of the Heart." In writing about spiritual formation, he noted it was not merely behavioral modification but a focus on whether someone was becoming more like Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. ❧