

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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## INSIDE



Alabama Baptist churches react to recent Boy Scouts policy change

◆ Page 3



'No child immune' from dangers posed by online predators, porn

◆ Pages 4-5

Southern Baptist Convention decline in baptisms 'heartbreaking'

◆ Page 7



IMB photos



Left: A city bus damaged by protesters near Gezi Park, the site where anti-government demonstrations began May 31 in Istanbul, Turkey. Top: A protestor wears a Guy Fawkes mask, often the symbol of political activism.

# Festive protests

## Christians in Turkey question outcome of demonstrations, hope gospel moves

**T**aksim Square in the heart of Istanbul seems like ground zero of the biggest party in Turkey. Groups of students dance hand-in-hand. Local musicians gather for impromptu open-air performances. Women hand out sesame-covered biscuits to anyone in arm's reach.

The mood is strangely festive, but the tens of thousands of people as-

sembled are not revelers — they are protesters.

On May 31, a peaceful protest over the destruction of a city park turned violent as riot police attempted to drive protesters from the area.

### Undercurrent of danger

The air in Taksim, recently saturated with pepper spray and tear gas, is now charged with hope and energy, but there is an undercurrent of danger.

Street vendors sell a bizarre mix of Turkish flags, surgical masks and swim goggles. The flags signal nationalistic pride, while the masks and goggles are intended to deflect gas used by riot police to disperse crowds. One vendor darkly quips, "The tear gas is coming to Taksim; you'll need these."

Some protesters wear badges sarcastically claiming they are looters. Others more ominously don Guy Fawkes masks, often the symbols

of political activism. Spontaneous chants for the resignation of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan erupt from every corner of the square.

But a question lingers, "What happens after the party is over?"

When asked what they hope the protests will achieve, Turkish

demonstrators provide a range of responses.

A well-educated elderly couple — a university professor and a doctor — replied simply, "We want freedom and peace."

A young woman who was in the park when police confronted the

(See 'Darker,' page 10)

## LMCO marks third largest offering in history

**S**outhern Baptists gave \$149.3 million to the 2012 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. It surpassed the 2011 offering of \$146.8 million by more than \$2.4 million and marked the third-highest amount given in the offering's 124-year history.

Speaking on behalf of missionaries across the globe, International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff expressed gratitude to God for the generosity of Southern Baptists.

"The significance of the Lottie Moon Offering for International Missions, promoted each year in partnership with national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), can only be understood in light of eternity," Elliff said. "[The 2012] offering, showing an increase during financially challenging days for our nation, is a reminder that missions is the stack pole around which Southern Baptists place their hearts, (See 'Southern,' page 8)

# COMMENT

## What Should We Learn From These Studies?

The conclusions of two studies done by professors at Georgetown University in Washington were not what people expected. Because of the impact of the Internet and various other new electronic media, there was great hope that the church would be able to connect with many who are not frequently in the pews by using these new outlets.

But studies done in 2011 and 2012 by the Center for Applied Research at Georgetown found only a handful of people (percentage wise) follow their local church or their denomination or even religion/spirituality via digital communications.

“Putting something on the Internet is a dramatically different delivery system with an entirely different numbers game,” the 2012 report stated. “No one will see it unless they search for it or are directed there by a site or social network they already use. When it comes to building new media — getting online and posting content — there is far from any guarantee that people will show up and see it.”

Both studies dealt specifically with Roman Catholics. The 2011 study examined “Catholic Media Use in the United States.” The 2012 study looked at “Catholic New Media Use in the United States.” The findings provide information that Christians of every denomination should consider.

Only 9 percent of respondents reported visiting their local church website as often as once a month. The percentage who said they regularly used their local church website was 4 percent. Those who followed blogs dealing with Roman Catholics, the Christian faith or with spirituality made up 5 percent of respondents.

### Not digital alone

By contrast, five times as many participants said they read a religious or spiritual newspaper or magazine in print during the last three months as reported reading similar material online (18 percent for print and 3 percent for digital). Seven times as many people said they read a religious or spiritual book in print in the last three months than read similar material in digital format (14 percent for print and 2 percent for digital).

Thirty-nine percent of adult church members reported reading their diocesan newspa-



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

per in the last three months. Only 1 percent reported reading the paper in digital format only.

Concerning websites, 14 percent said they visited at least one Roman Catholic-related website in the last three months.

To the surprise of many, Millennials (those born in 1982 or later) did not express overwhelming preferences for online content. About a third of the responders indicated a preference for online content (32 percent) while another third preferred reading print (33 percent). The other 35 percent expressed no preference.

“Millennials are generally no more likely than older Catholics to say they have done anything online or through the use of e-readers related to religion or spirituality,” a summary of the 2012 report stated.

In fact, “the typical Catholic who uses Facebook for religion and spirituality is not a Millennial at all. It is a non-Hispanic, White, divorced woman born between 1943–1960 living in a home in the Midwest with an income between \$85,000–\$100,000.”

Millennials certainly use the Internet and digital media more than other generations. That generation averages more than three and a half hours a day online. Baby Boomers devote about two-thirds that amount of time to online activity. But Millennials do not seem to use the media in relationship to religion and faith. Only 6 percent, the study said, had ever looked at religion-related videos on YouTube, for example.

Sixty-seven percent of Millennials said they had not accessed anything related to their church, religion or spirituality in the past three months.

General interest in news of the church seems

to be waning, the study found. During 2012, Internet searches containing the word “Catholic” were down 37 percent from the search volumes of January 2004, the study reported.

Matthew Schiller, business manager for *Catholic New York*, connected the decline to the digital revolution. He said, “Basically the study found that when the church converted its distribution of news from print to online, there was a direct correlation with less giving, less volunteers and fewer (people) in the seats.” That is a powerful statement.

Before the digital revolution the church could put a copy of its church bulletin or the denominational newspaper in a person’s hand or mailbox. From there it made its way onto the family’s coffee table or counter top. The U.S. Postal Service found that almost 98 percent of customers bring their mail into their homes the day it arrives.

### Connection to the reader

There it becomes one of just a few other things that could be read. Because of its direct connection to the reader through his or her church, a church bulletin or denominational newspaper has a high chance of being read, studies found.

Today readership of church and denominational news has fallen as the two Catholic studies documented and so have offerings, volunteers and participants. Which caused the other is a chicken-or-the egg problem, but there is no denying the relationship.

The two Georgetown University studies of Roman Catholics in the United States clearly show that relying on online communications as the primary strategy for enlisting and involving church members in church and denominational activities is failing. Equally frustrating is counting on a website or blog to reach new people or to educate already reached people.

Websites, blogs, Facebook, tweets, digital editions — all are important but it is a mistake to place high expectations that any single one or all together will solve the church’s communication challenges.

Churches would do well to take note of what businesses have already learned. Single media contact is not an effective communications strategy. Using a multichannel strategy gets the best results. Several studies document that print media continues to outperform electronic communications. But when the two mediums are combined, the results outpace what either can do alone.

Holding to the hope of connecting with many who infrequently or never sit in our pews is a genuine ideal. But there is no silver bullet that will make it happen. At the very least, we should learn from these studies that the church has to use all the tools available so “that by all means we may win some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

#### ‘CHURCH’S WAISTLINE’

I was very glad to see the article in *The Alabama Baptist* about “the church’s waistline.” I am very much in agreement with this problem in the church. It is hard sharing the love of

Christ when the body of Christ has little or no self-control. One suggestion made in the article was that we need more programs. There is already a program available to help churches with this issue, along with many more

issues. It is called Celebrate Recovery. Most people think that Celebrate (See ‘Letters,’ page 11)





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

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# To stay or not to stay



## Alabama Baptist churches react to recent Boy Scouts policy change

By Julie Payne  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**labama Baptist churches are among churches nationwide determining their response to the May 23 Boy Scouts of America (BSA) decision to allow gay youth Scouting members beginning Jan. 1, 2014.

First Baptist Church, Pelham, will dissolve its relationship with Troop 404 as of Jan. 1, according to Pastor Mike Shaw.

The church's decision to disaffiliate is not about hate and is based on the fact that the new policy "violates clear teaching of Scripture," he said. "We have no alternative but to withdraw from Scouting.

"It breaks my heart," Shaw noted. "I was a Boy Scout. My boys were involved in Scouting for a short time ... and we've had some wonderful Scouts come through our program.

"If they had left things alone, we wouldn't be having this discussion right now," he said, noting he holds no ill will against the organization and is more than willing for another church to pick up the unit.

### 'We needed to sever ties'

Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster, is ending its affiliation with the Scouts when its charter of Troop 220 expires July 31.

"We had a great working relationship with the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts at our campus ... we're talking many, many years that we've had a wonderful relationship with that organization," said executive pastor Rick Swing. "When the BSA made their decision to change their policy to allow homosexuals in their rank and file, as a church we knew we needed to sever ties. We can't embrace what they're doing at (the) national level."

Greg Walker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Helena, also reported his church will no longer host Troop 2 but will allow the unit time to look for a new meeting place.

With about 4,000 Scouting units in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches, it is a discussion that could severely impact BSA. Predictions at press time indicated messengers attending the SBC annual meeting in Houston June 11-12 would vote on a resolution urging SBC churches to disaffiliate with the BSA.

Ernest Easley, pastor of Roswell Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga., and current chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, is urging parents of Boy Scouts to take their children out of the organization and that Troop 204's affiliation with his congregation would end, according to Associated Baptist Press.

This is an opportunity to strengthen current

Royal Ambassador (RA) programs (or start new ones) "and to get the boys in a program where they're going to be protected, where there's a high moral standard and where they will have an opportunity to learn about camping, missions [and] evangelism in the local church," Easley said, according to a CNN report.

There's also FaithBasedBoys.org, a website that was recently launched to serve as a virtual gathering place for those interested in developing a Christ-centered leadership and character development organization for boys aged 5-18.

American Heritage Girls (AHG), a nonprofit founded in 1995 by a group of parents desiring a wholesome program for their daughters, has come alongside those working to build the new boys program and infrastructure "by providing best practices and counsel," according to AHG founder and executive director Patti Garibay.

"Thousands of families are finding respite

in the thought of a program that affirms their religious beliefs while providing their sons the opportunity to grow in life skills and leadership," Garibay said, adding the specific goals of the new program will be determined by the coalition following their end of June meeting, and dependent on the coalition and committee work, a new program may be available to families this year.

Not all Baptists are jumping ship, however. Some are looking at the BSA move as an outreach opportunity.

R. Chip Turner, national chairman of the Boy Scouts' Religious Relationships

Task Force and past national president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting, acknowledged that while the decision isn't what many preferred, it is a time to prayerfully consider the evangelism and family ministry opportunities within the church's Scout units.

Turner explained that churches are not being compelled to accept homosexual leaders or the homosexual lifestyle.

"The resolution clearly states that 'youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life.' Shouldn't Baptists be at the forefront in helping youth find answers which are biblically based?" he wrote in an open letter to Southern Baptists.

J.T. Dabbs III, Scout executive for the Greater Alabama Council of the BSA, added that Scouting is a "great way to bring un-

churched families into the church."

"We believe no young person comes to the Scouts or to the church perfect. It is our role to model for these young people what godly living is about and remind them what values are important," he said. "The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout oath and law. It's hard to do that if they aren't in our program."

Scouting leaders also are urging Baptists to clearly understand the new policy before making a decision.

A.J. Smith, president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting, said, "I contacted the membership impact department at the national office of the Boy Scouts of America, proposing an interpretation of the changes in membership guidelines," he said. "The response I received

from the [BSA] was that this interpretation (outlined below) was correct in every point so long as a charter organization did not try to use it to exclude a boy solely on the basis of his perceived sexual orientation."

First, the resolution clearly states that sexual activity among Scout-aged youth is contrary to Scouting virtues. So long as it is uniformly and equitably applied, a unit could have in its code of conduct a statement regarding sexual abstinence as a condition of membership.

Second, while the resolution says that youth may not be denied membership solely on the basis of the youth's

self-perceived sexual orientation, it does not say that a youth may not be denied membership if his behavior becomes a distraction to the program or the performance of the unit, or if his behavior casts a poor reflection on the reputation of the charter organization.

Third, the resolution does not require that a church-chartered unit affirm the moral acceptability of same-sex attraction where that would be contrary to values and beliefs of the charter organization.

Fourth, the resolution does not preclude the right of the church to ask adult leaders to exemplify by word and example the positive nature of traditional, heterosexual marriage as their recognized standard of what it means to be morally straight with the goal of influencing youth in the unit to appreciate and appropriate that as part of their personal values system.

"The BSA is working on a list of behavior (See 'Can churches,' page 11)

**"It is our role to model for these young people what godly living is about and remind them what values are important."**

**J.T. Dabbs III**  
Scout executive, Greater Alabama Council of the BSA

# Keeping children SAFE online



123rf.com

## ‘No child immune’ from dangers posed by online predators, porn

### SBC to launch War Against Pornography

Southern Baptists are coming alongside Pastor Jay Dennis of First Baptist Church at the Mall, Lakeland, Fla., to launch the “Join 1 Million Men in the War Against Pornography” campaign and its related resources at this year’s Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 11–12 in Houston, Texas.

The War Against Pornography will take the movement nationwide with a goal of 1 million men taking a public stand against pornography and the support of 1 million women praying for them and their families.

For more information, visit [www.join1millionmen.org](http://www.join1millionmen.org). (BP)

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**J**eff Cargile was 4 years old when he first saw a pornographic magazine, a *Playboy* he found in a barn loft. Forty-three years later, he can still close his eyes and recall the illicit images he saw that day.

Many adults can relate to Cargile’s experience. Before the days of the Internet, magazines were the primary way children were exposed to pornography. That is not true today.

Today’s kids have access to the Internet at school and at home. Those who carry a cellphone with a data plan are connected everywhere they go. With such connectivity comes great risk, perhaps none as great as the dangers of pornography and predators.

“In the last 10 years, technology has improved and social media has become much easier for people to use and navigate,” said Randy Christian, chief deputy for the Jeffer-

son County Sheriff’s Office.

Combine the ease of use with the fact that young children and even toddlers now use phones and computers daily and the dangers to children and teens are multiplied.

#### Where danger lurks

Without proper supervision, children can stumble onto pornographic websites or post personal information to social media sites where child predators lurk, Christian said.

Explicit online content is a big concern for parents, said Blake Kersey, minister to children at First Baptist Church, Trussville.

Kersey regularly hears from parents whose children have seen profanity posted on Facebook or have followed a link to a pornographic website. Parents are worried that their children are maturing too fast and want to protect them, Kersey said, which is why First, Trussville, recently hosted an Internet safety seminar led by Cargile, a member of the church and an informational technology specialist, to address the topic.

“The problem in the past might have been that kids were finding things online that they weren’t even looking for,” Kersey said. “Now pornographic sites are looking for

**“The problem in the past might have been that kids were finding things online that they weren’t even looking for. Now pornographic sites are looking for children by placing ads on sites that children visit.”**

**Blake Kersey**  
minister to children, FBC Trussville

**“Once a child’s innocence is stolen, they can’t get it back. Parents have to guard it like a hawk and teach kids how to protect themselves as well.”**

**Blake Kersey**  
minister to children, FBC Trussville

children by placing ads on sites that children visit.”

Pornography is big business in the U.S., according to Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research. Stetzer has written extensively about online pornography, and in his article “The Pornification of American Culture,” he cites statistics gathered by the consumer electronics weblog Gizmodo that highlight the pervasive access of Americans to online pornography.

### First exposure at 11

According to Gizmodo, pornography is a \$13 billion business, and 89 percent of all pornographic Web pages are produced in the U.S.

Some 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites, and 70 percent of men aged 18–24 visit porn sites monthly, Stetzer writes.

The average age of first exposure to online pornography? Eleven.

While parents want to protect their children’s innocence, the implications of such widespread availability of pornographic material go beyond simple choices of right and wrong, especially for boys, according to William B. Struthers, professor of psychology at Wheaton College

and author of the book “Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain” (InterVarsity, 2009). Struthers writes that regular exposure to pornography rewires the male brain to be “over-sexualized” and fixated on sex rather than intimacy.

“All women become potential porn stars in the minds of these men,” Struthers writes. “They have unknowingly created a neurological circuit that imprisons their ability to see women rightly as created in God’s image.”

The dangers are more than mental and spiritual, however. Though perhaps not as prevalent as media depictions might lead parents to believe, adults do sometimes use chat rooms and social networking sites to initiate contact with teenagers, according to the website of the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. Adult offenders seek out teens on these sites and develop relationships with them online that lead to face-to-face meetings. Often these meetings involve sexual encounters between the adults and teens, primarily teen girls.

According to a study published in the November 2004 issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 75 percent of victims

in Internet-initiated sexual exploitation cases were 13–15 years old and 75 percent of those victims were girls. The study also found that with both boys and girls, the offenders were most likely to be males older than 25 who did not hide their interest in a sexual relationship from the victims.

These statistics suggest that insecure teens are vulnerable to the false promises of online relationships and pornography — what Struthers calls the “lie of sexual fulfillment and freedom.” Parental involvement is the key to protecting children from these online dangers, Kersey said.

“Ignorance is no longer an excuse to be wide open with technology,” Kersey said. “We want to show parents the reality of what’s out there and to equip them with

simple programs and parameters so they have a grasp of what they need to do to protect their children.”

Cargile recommends that parents set up Web filters and parental controls on all computers, and for portable devices like Apple iPods, iPads and iPhones, Cargile recommends that parents replace the Safari browser with the free K-9 Web Protection Browser to block objectionable content.

Parents also should monitor all

computers and electronic devices to evaluate the messages their kids are sending and receiving and the websites they are visiting, Kersey said. This includes tracking texts and Facebook posts, as well as who kids are following (and who is following them) on Twitter. If kids are deleting texts or covering their tracks online, Kersey said parents must respond immediately, even if it means taking the technology away.

### Parents’ responsibility

“Our message to parents is that you own that computer, you own that phone,” Kersey said. “You need to be checking that device daily and your kids need to know the dangers online that you are protecting them from.”

Cargile believes no child is immune from the dangers online, even though many parents believe they are.

Kersey said the issue is about a parent’s responsibility to guard their child’s heart and mind.

“Once a child’s innocence is stolen, they can’t get it back. Parents have to guard it like a hawk and teach kids how to protect themselves as well.” ❧

# Parent’s guide to protecting children online

## What you must tell your children

### 1. Never give out personal information.

Talk to your children about how seemingly harmless information like names, addresses and phone numbers, as well as names of parents or guardians, schools, sports teams, sports fields and friends can be used to figure out a child’s identity.

### 2. Never call or meet anyone in person that you met online.

Talk to your children about sex, romance and autonomy. Explain to them why adults should not be seeking relationships with teenagers and children and tell them that not everyone tells the truth online.

### 3. Never send anyone a photo online without checking first with a parent or guardian.

Talk to your children about healthy Internet interactions as well as the dangers of online sexual predators, chat rooms, social networking sites and pornography. Be suspicious of mail, gifts or packages addressed to your child from unfamiliar names and addresses.

### 4. Never ignore messages or photographs that make you feel uncomfortable.

Encourage your children to tell you immediately if they receive any emails or messages that include inappropriate language and/or images. Place computers in common areas of your home and use filtering software to block undesirable content.

**75 percent of victims in Internet-initiated sexual exploitation cases were 13–15 years old and 75 percent of those victims were girls.**

**NetSmartz Workshop, a program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, is a website offering information and interactive tutorials about online safety. The site includes information and tutorials for specific target audiences, including parents, educators, law enforcement, teens, tweens and kids. Visit [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org) for more information.**

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## BALDWIN

► **Fairhope Community Church** will hold revival June 23 at 10:15 a.m. and nightly at 6:30 p.m. Sunday–Wednesday. Jake Hartley will speak and Tony Hinton will lead worship. David L. Stookey is pastor. ► **Bill McCrary**, vice president for church



McCRARY

relations at the Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA), was the guest speaker at the Autumn Fellowship on May 31 at **First Church, Foley**. McCrary spoke about the importance of having a will, as well as how TBFA can help people continue to have their estate continue the work of spreading the Lord's work and His Great Commission through missions, their own church or scholarships. Billy Nale is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Rickey (Ric) Camp** is the new pastor of **Ridgecrest Church, Trussville**. He holds an associate degree from Snead State Junior College in Boaz, a bachelor of science



CAMP

degree in religion from Samford University in Birmingham, a master of arts degree in religious education from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a doctorate of educational ministry from New Orleans Seminary. Camp is active in Baptist life on both the state and national level. He and his wife, Lisa, have two children.

## CALHOUN

► **Ruhama Church, Anniston**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary June 30. The worship service and celebration will be 10 a.m.–11:30 a.m. and will include guest speakers and recognition of former pastors. New Desire will sing from 11:30 a.m.–noon, and a lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Everyone is invited. For information call 256-238-8348 or 256-741-6212. Benjie Miller is interim pastor.

## CENTRAL

► **First Church, Weogufka**, will celebrate homecoming June

15, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Albert Pike will speak at 10 a.m. and dinner will follow. There also will be an afternoon singing. Jerry Smith is pastor.

## COOSA RIVER

► Arranger and orchestrator Richard Kingsmore will lead an orchestra and choir of more than 100 local voices in Afternoon of Praise, a community-wide praise experience at Talladega's Historic Ritz Theatre on Aug. 4, 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Music ministries from multiple churches throughout the community are participating, including **First Church, Talladega; Central Church, Talladega; Munford Church and Southside Church, Talladega**. For ticket information call 256-315-0000.

## MADISON

► **Michael Cassity** is the new pastor of **Jackson Way Church, Huntsville**. He previously served as pastor of Ridgecrest Church, Montgomery, for seven and a half years. He also served as president for the 2012



CASSITY

Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference. Cassity holds a bachelor of science in personnel psychology from Athens State University, a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary and a doctor of divinity from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

## MOBILE

► **First Church, Chickasaw**, will celebrate homecoming/reunion weekend June 28–30. On June 30 at 10:45 a.m., Rick Shepherd, director of prayer and spiritual awakening of the Florida Baptist Convention, will speak. Music will be led by Rick Kelly of First Church, Snow Road, in Semmes. For information call 251-452-0222. Adam Hammond is pastor. ► The James E. Messer Ministries annual meeting will be held at **First Church, Theodore**, on June 22, 10 a.m.–noon. The speaker will be Fred Luter, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Franklin Avenue Church, New Orleans, La. There will be a barbecue lunch catered by Ranch House Restaurant. To make reservations by June 20 at noon, call 251-653-6652. David Gill is pastor of First, Theodore.

## NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Tim Bozeman** is the new pastor of **New Beginnings Community Church, Graysville**. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama and holds a civil engineering degree. He previously served the church as associate pastor. He and his wife, Sonya, have three children.

## SELMA

► Will Langston, men's ministry director for **Selma Association**, has organized a Selma/Dallas County Sav-A-Life Family Fun Day on June 22, beginning at 8 a.m. at Lake Lanier (Ralston Acres) in Selma. The event will honor families that have chosen to give life to their babies after receiving counseling at the center. There will be fishing and games for the children. Hot dogs, hamburgers, chips and drinks will be provided. There also will be magic shows and music and the gospel will be shared. Tom Stacey is director of missions.

## ST. CLAIR

► A group of 52 people from **First Church, Pell City**, participated in a GA's missions trip to Elizabethtown, Ky., June 6–9. John Thweatt is pastor.

## Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

### Sands to help establish pharmacy school in Asia

Charlie Sands III, dean of Samford University's McWhorter School of Pharmacy, is preparing for an upcoming one-year sabbatical to help establish a new pharmacy school in a restricted-access country in Asia.

Sands, who has led Samford's pharmacy school since 2008, has stepped down as dean but will remain a member of the Samford pharmacy faculty, returning to campus following his sabbatical, which begins Sept. 1.



SANDS

Sands and his wife, Elizabeth, served with the International Mission Board as medical missionaries to Asian countries on several occasions beginning in 1971 in South Korea. In 1991 they became faculty members at Yanbian University Medical College in Yanji, China.

Sands joined the faculty at McWhorter School of Pharmacy in 1997.

"This is a very exciting opportunity to continue and perhaps complete the ministry in Asia which we originally received in the Lord," Sands said.

Samford Provost and Executive Vice President J. Bradley Creed said Sands "has been a leader with a world vision for education, missions and preparing health professionals for service."

"I am pleased that he will return to Samford after his sabbatical as a faculty member where he will continue to have an impact on the lives of our students," he said.

Creed appointed Michael Hogue, chair of the pharmacy practice department in the School of Pharmacy, as interim dean. Samford will announce plans later to conduct a national search for Sands' successor.

Sands said he would remain on the faculty in July and August to assist the interim dean. (SU)



By Christine Kapurch  
Correspondent, TAB

## Someone You Should Know

### JADA PATE BURNS

Valley Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Remlap  
Blount Baptist Association

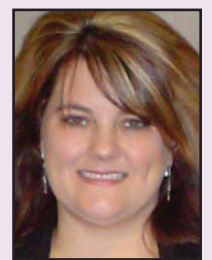
**FAVORITE VERSE:** Philippians 4:13

**FAVORITE HYMN:** "Precious Moments"

**HOBBIES:** Reading, traveling with

**family and online Bible group**

**FAMILY STATUS:** Married to Bill for 12 years; two children, Harris and Payten



BURNS

*Jada Pate Burns has sung in the church choir since she was 5 years old. She grew up in a musical home where her mother played the piano and she was constantly learning new solos for the church. She now sings with her daughter every Sunday. She also is a Vacation Bible School (VBS) teacher and acting director for the past four years. She previously taught Sunday School.*

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

**A:** My parents always took me to church. I would say they have definitely been the biggest influence (in my faith journey).

**Q: When and how were you led into the ministry?**

**A:** I've just always enjoyed singing so it came naturally. My mother played the piano so she was always teaching me new songs. The need to teach was God's calling for me which is why I recently went back to school for my masters in education.

**Q: What does the ministry demand?**

**A:** To be loving and patient and to always have time for others.

**Q: What do you get from the ministry?**

**A:** Any time you are doing anything for God that in and of itself is a blessing. It could be a child thanking me or my music bringing a tear to someone's eye. There are

immediate and tangible benefits, but there's nothing like knowing in your heart you are doing it for our Lord.

**Q: How do family members support you?**

**A:** They are all very supportive. The years I've been in charge of VBS my husband is always building and helping on creative projects ... my husband's there stapling until midnight. I still attend church with my parents and they encourage me to sing.

**Q: How do you see yourself involved in this in the future?**

**A:** I'll probably continue to do what I do and see where God leads me. Wherever there is a need I want to try and help in any way I can.

# SBC decline in baptisms ‘heartbreaking’

## Southern Baptists see membership drop for sixth straight year

**A**nual baptisms in Southern Baptist churches have declined by 100,000 in the last 12 years, with last year dropping to the smallest number in 64 years.

According to the Annual Church Profile (ACP) released by LifeWay Christian Resources, total membership of 15,872,404 marked the sixth straight year of statistical decline for the nation’s second-largest faith group behind Roman Catholics.

Membership dropped by 105,000 — two-thirds of a percent. Weekly worship attendance, meanwhile, fell below 6 million to 5,966,735, down 3 percent.

Although baptisms were a bright spot in last year’s report, increasing 0.7 percent, this year’s report shows a decline of 5.5 percent to 314,956 people. Reported baptisms have declined six of the last eight years, with 2012 the lowest since 1948. The ratio of baptisms to total members increased to one baptism for every 50 members.

“While we celebrate every new baptized believer represented by these numbers, fewer reported baptisms is heartbreaking,” said Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay. “Southern Baptists cannot rest on what God accomplished through us in prior years. The message of the gospel is alive, relevant and powerful today, and the Great Commission task of sharing it should excite and embolden us as Christians.”

### Growth in number of churches

Southern Baptists experienced growth in the number of churches affiliated with the convention in 2012 and the total amount given for denominational missions causes. The number of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) grew by 270 to 46,034, a 0.6 percent increase over the previous year. SBC churches also reported 4,992

church-type missions last year, 40 more than in 2011, although some state conventions no longer use that designation, which may have impacted the total.

Although the number of SBC-related congregations grew, reported membership of those churches declined more than 100,000, down 0.7 percent to 15.9 million members.

Frank Page, SBC Executive Committee president, said, “When I first heard the report of our ACP, I said, ‘God forgive us and God help us.’ We are thankful for every person won to Christ and every person enrolled in Bible study and discipleship and involved in missions. We are thankful for the millions who are a part of worship in our Southern Baptist churches.

“However, my heart breaks when we realize the overall decline in our numbers,” Page said.

“Let’s get perspective on this,” he said. “Where are people won to Christ? Where do people go to church? Everything depends on the local level. It is where everything of significance occurs. The questions that every Southern Baptist must answer are, ‘What am I doing for the Lord? Am I winning more or less people to Christ? Am I giving more or less to missions? Am I being faithful in my support of my church?’ These are serious questions that I must ask myself. Will you join me?”

Concerned leaders offer various explanations for the trend, which experts say began in the 1960s. Professor William Day of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary cited two factors in a 2003 article in the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*.

One is an increasing ratio between church membership and baptism rates. Before 1935, Southern Baptists baptized one person for every 20 members. Between 1935 and 1959 the ratio was less than 25 to 1. In 2012, it took 50 church members to baptize one person. Day said that indicates an overall loss of evangelistic zeal.

Another factor is the changing role of Sunday School. During the 1950s, Southern Baptists viewed it as the “outreach arm of the church,” he said. In most churches today Sunday School functions to assimilate members in small groups after they walk the aisle in worship to join.

### Attempts to reverse the downturn

Recent leaders have tried various approaches to fix the problem. After his election as SBC president in 2004, Florida pastor Bobby Welch embarked on a cross-country bus tour to promote his personal goal of 1 million baptisms a year. Baptisms that year reached 387,947 before falling the next two years to the lowest number since 1993.

Johnny Hunt, SBC president from 2008 to 2010, called for a “Great Commission Resurgence,” a renewed zeal for proclaiming the gospel.

He appointed a “Great Commission Task Force,” which after two years of study returned a report in 2010 calling on the denomination to reprioritize spending so that maximum resources go toward reaching the unreached.

It is difficult to track missions giving since then, as some new categories have been added and not all Baptist state conventions gather the same data. However, total and undesignated receipts reported through the ACP were down 2.4 percent and 1.5 percent respectively.

## Alabama

## statistics

|                             | 2012          | 2011          |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Associations                | 75            | 75            |
| Churches                    | 3,233         | 3,244         |
| Baptisms                    | 18,236        | 19,178        |
| Other Additions             | 20,900        | 22,799        |
| Total Membership            | 1,020,235     | 1,039,228     |
| Total Receipts              | \$718,897,051 | \$732,460,257 |
| Total Missions Expenditures | \$86,475,201  | \$91,184,926  |

Total missions expenditures reported by the churches declined 1 percent in 2012, although reported giving to Southern Baptist missions causes increased more than \$48 million (7 percent) to \$744 million. The “Great Commission Giving” category was added to the ACP reporting form in 2011 as a reflection of each church’s financial gifts to local, state and national SBC missions causes. Although two more state conventions reported Great Commission Giving in 2012 than the previous year, two states have yet to add the statistic to their annual survey.

### Missions money

Giving through the SBC’s Cooperative Program (CP) missions initiative is not included in the ACP annual report because those totals are more accurately available through Baptist state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee, which processes the missions gifts. However, giving through the CP in fiscal year 2011 was virtually the same as the previous year. CP giving the first eight months of this year was reported June 3 to be 1.6 percent behind the same period the year before.

Statistics for the national ACP are reported by individual churches to their local association and/or state convention, and national totals cannot be compiled and released until all cooperating state conventions have reported. Scott McConnell, LifeWay’s director of research, said the files are due in February but some final data was not received this year until the last week of May. (ABP, BP)

### Southern Baptist Convention Statistical Summary

|                    | 2012       | 2011       | 2010       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Associations       | 1,169      | 1,174      | 1,175      |
| Churches           | 46,034     | 45,764     | 45,727     |
| Total Membership   | 15,872,404 | 15,978,112 | 16,136,044 |
| Baptisms           | 314,956    | 333,341    | 332,321    |
| Ratio of Baptism:  | 1:50       | 1:48       | 1:49       |
| Total Membership   |            |            |            |
| Weekly Worship     | 5,966,735  | 6,155,116  | 6,195,449  |
| Attendance         |            |            |            |
| Church-type        | 4,992      | 4,952      | 5,011      |
| Missions Operating |            |            |            |

### Other 2012 Items — Not Asked by All State Conventions

|                             | 2012             | 2011             |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Other Additions             | 293,951          | 303,881          |
| Undesignated Receipts       | \$8,891,673,582  | \$9,023,216,896  |
| Total Receipts              | \$11,521,418,784 | \$11,805,027,705 |
| Total Missions Expenditures | \$1,314,875,376  | \$1,328,672,872  |
| Great Commission Giving     | \$744,043,625    | \$695,694,322    |

## Alabama Baptist



Year to Date through May 31, 2013

### MAY

CP Challenge Budget Goal ..... \$3,558,333  
 CP Challenge Budget Gifts..... \$3,514,714  
 Under Goal for Month..... \$43,619

### YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal ..... \$17,791,665  
 CP Challenge Budget Gifts..... \$17,969,368  
 Over Goal for Year..... \$177,703

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

## Southern Baptists' gifts help carry gospel to ends of earth

(continued from page 1)  
afire for the gospel."

Southern Baptists' missions giving is "the clear, undeniable barometer of our passion," Elliff said, noting that "nothing would so urge God to turn His face away from our convention, its churches and people as a loss of zeal for fulfilling the Great Commission."

Although recent statistics show a decline of 2.4 percent in overall giving among Southern Baptist churches, Elliff expressed optimism about this increase in their continued missions support.

"I pray this year's offering is an unmistakable indication that in coming days Southern Baptists will give, go and carry the gospel together — to the ends of the earth," he said.

Wanda Lee, WMU executive director-treasurer, also expressed gratitude to Southern Baptists for the increase.

### Significant increase

"We were excited to hear about the significant increase of \$2.4 million over last year's receipts for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering," Lee said. "How exciting, after four years of economic challenges, to see Southern Baptists continue to increase their giving to our international missions offering. While we are grateful for this third-largest offering in our history, we are still praying for individuals and churches to understand the biblical call to stewardship and sacrificial giving that will enable more to go and more to hear the wonderful story of Jesus."

Along with Southern Baptists' regular giving through the Cooperative Program, the Lottie Moon offering, named

for Southern Baptists' most famous missionary, supports nearly 4,900 missionaries worldwide. It funds salaries, housing, medical care and children's education. Supporting one missionary overseas costs an average of nearly \$50,000 per year — or \$136 per day.

### Reaching more

Most important, Lottie Moon support made it possible for IMB missionaries, working with their ministry partners around the globe, to communicate the gospel to more than 1.4 million people, lead more than 337,000 to faith in Christ, baptize 266,451 new believers and start more than 24,000 churches, according to IMB's most recent annual statistical report in 2011.

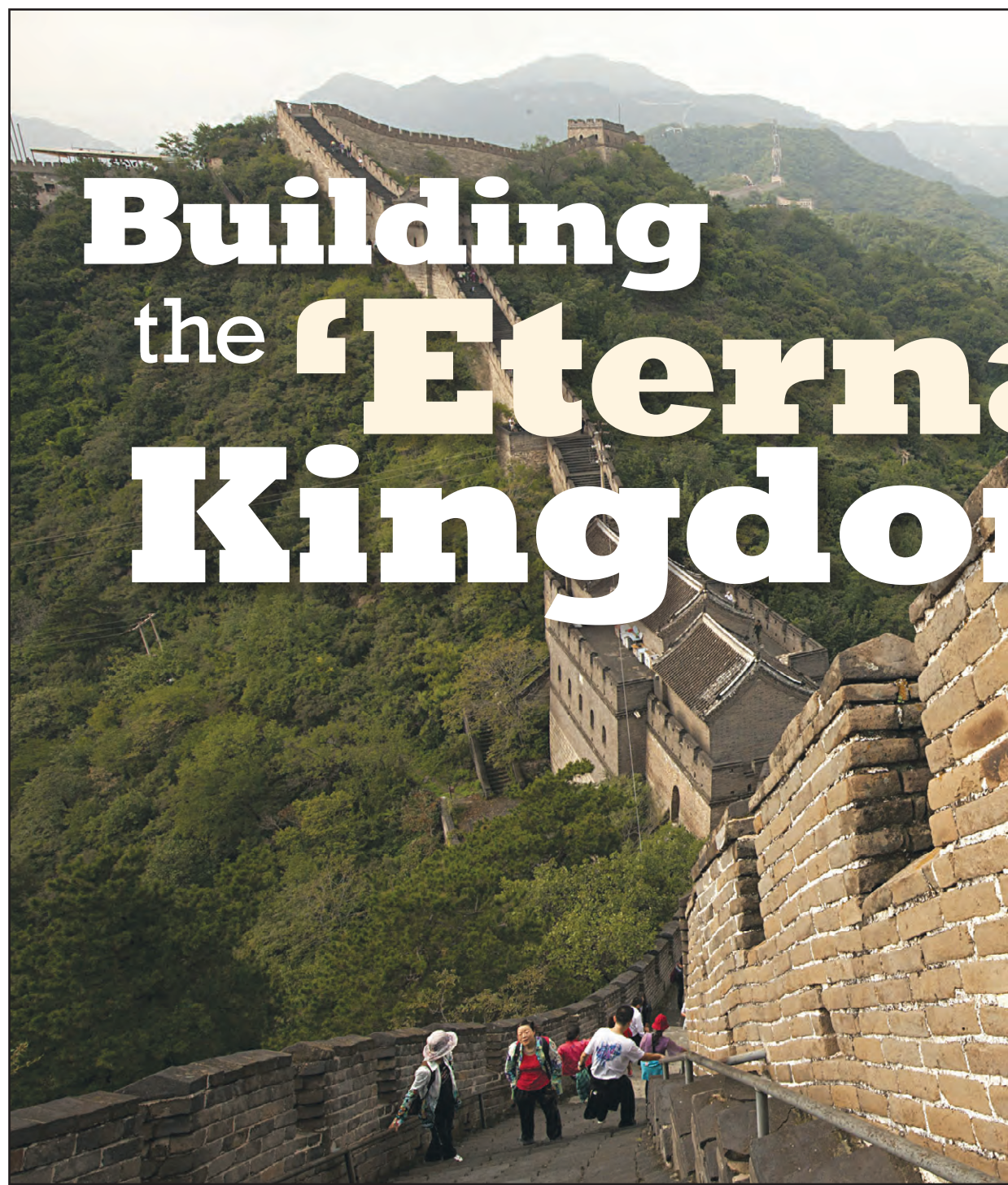
Though the 2012 offering fell short of the \$175-million national goal, "We are grateful first and foremost to the Lord for all that He provides," said David Steverson, IMB treasurer and vice president for finance. "We have confidence that He knows just exactly what we need and also knows exactly when we need it. We are grateful that He chooses to use Southern Baptists in such a great way to provide the support we need."

The offering marked the fourth-straight annual increase since the 2008 offering — which fell about 6 percent below the previous year's total as the global economic downturn that year was felt by churches. The overall giving trend since then has been on the upswing, but "only marginally," Steverson said.

The Lottie Moon Offering goal for 2013 is \$175 million. (BP)

***"[The 2012] offering, showing an increase during financially challenging days for our nation, is a reminder that missions is the stack pole around which Southern Baptists place their hearts, afire for the gospel."***

**Tom Elliff**  
president, International Mission Board



The well-preserved Mutianyu section of the Great Wall snakes along a ridge about 40 miles northeast of Beijing's urban

# B

Beijing is an urban center peopled by the rich, politically privileged — and utterly poor. Outwardly it's strikingly modern with its Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium and rapidly expanding state-of-the-art subway system. It's ancient, too, with the Forbidden City of Imperial China at its heart. It's blatantly communist with the Soviet-styled Great Hall of the People set in the city center, and capitalist with posh shopping areas shimmering with luxury designer goods nearby. It's also a magnet, drawing people from throughout the country as they flow in from provinces seeking employment and a better life. Thomas, a Christian worker in Beijing, sees the drawing power of the capital city as a strategic place for reaching out into China's provinces with the gospel message.

"Beijing is a city that breathes people," Thomas said. "Every day hundreds of thousands of people travel in and out of the city. At peak times there are more than a million travelers per day. Some stay only a few days, yet others stay much longer.

Beijing is an urban center peopled by the rich, politically privileged — and utterly poor.

Outwardly it's strikingly modern with its Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium and rapidly expanding state-of-the-art subway system. It's ancient, too, with

"A few who come are already Christians from two strong Christian areas of China — Henan and Anhui. Most are not and know more about Coca-Cola than Christ," he said. "Whether they come as tourists, on business or looking for some kind of employment, we want all who enter the capital of the Middle Kingdom to learn of the Eternal Kingdom and the Emperor who died on a cross for them," Thomas said.

### Surging population

When Beijing's population hit 19 million in late 2009, it had already surpassed the government's target to keep the capital's population below 18 million until the year 2020. Government officials are searching for ways to slow the city's growth, as infrastructure can't keep up with the surging population, which has now reached more than 20 million.

"The size of Beijing doesn't intimidate me," Thomas said. "It's not a mass of humanity. You learn to read it sociodemographically ... once you get above a million, it doesn't really make a difference. You look at where you have the relationships."

China is riding the same wave of urbanization as the rest of the globe. The United Nations estimates that by 2050 nearly 70 percent of the world's 10 billion people will be living in cities, up from only 30 percent living in cities in 1950. A similar scenario is occurring in China but — as in its economic and industrial de-



al  
m'

## Southern Baptist representatives spread gospel from heart of Middle Kingdom

IMB photo core. The Beijing municipality is vast, reaching well into rural areas and as far as the iconic structure.

velopment — at a much more rapid pace. As recently as 1980, less than 20 percent of China's population lived in cities. In the '80s, Chinese citizens were generally assigned to "work units" and the central government largely restricted their movements. Opportunities for work in cities nevertheless beckoned and even in the mid-'80s there was a significant percentage of temporary workers lured to cities such as Beijing. With China's meteoric economic development of recent decades, that "floating population" has increased in the capital and in other cities in China. By the end of 2011 half of China's population was living in cities.

"You have a lot of advantages [as a Christian worker] in the city," Thomas said. He explains that relationships in urban environments are built through mutual interests rather than proximity.

"In some ways it is very natural," he said. "In some ways, the bigger the city, the better your odds of finding somebody with similar interests. In the city you can't share with everybody. It's not practical and not effective. You find points of common interest. You build relationships. The gospel spreads along relational lines."

"So when I look at the city I don't see the masses of people," he said. "It's easy to start seeing the pockets. Where do you start in a city? Wherever your relationships take you."

For Thomas, this is in training others to be effective witnesses. For others it may be connecting with subcultures of artists or musicians.

Change has come to China at such a blistering pace that it is hard to know what is next. Thomas points out that in the Book of Acts, God used persecution to scatter the church. Likewise, he suggests: "God is using economic migration to bring the lost to the church [in the city]."

"Napoleon Bonaparte said 'when China awakes, the world will tremble.' In the sovereignty of God, as countries rise and fall, God is bringing China to the center stage of world history," Thomas said. "It's not a question of 'Will China rise?' It's a question of 'What kind of China will it be?'"

"Those fields of harvest are rice paddies. They're longing for the gospel. And they're coming to us, even here in the city."

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



IMB photo

In 2011, the Beijing subway system tallied 2.18 billion passenger rides. With so few believers in Beijing, Christian workers face a daunting task.

## Middle-aged couple not deterred by obstacles in China

**W**hen Steve was diagnosed with prostate cancer just before he and his wife, Lisa, were planning to move to China, some friends took it as a sign.

"People [said], 'I guess you are not supposed to be going overseas,'" Steve said. "I said, 'No, I think I am just getting a tune-up here.'" Treatment for the illness caused a year's delay in their plans, but it didn't deter the middle-aged couple.

At a time when most of their generation are deciding where to settle for their golden years, Steve and Lisa saw these years as a golden opportunity. During an earlier visit with friends who work in another part of China, Steve and Lisa opened their hearts to the idea of sharing Jesus Christ in China as well.

"Every day we just saw the Lord doing things. So halfway through the trip we said we ought to check this out," Steve said. It was a longer road to the field than they expected. Before they landed in Beijing, Steve completed a seminary degree as well as his cancer treatment.

"We can see that that whole year was all part of the plan," Steve said. "We were in a whole different place when that year was over."

### Reaching young people

God has used them from the very start, bringing a variety of young people into their lives before they even acquired language skills. They led several to the Lord, and by the time they'd been in Beijing a year, they were discipling a

number of young adults. All had come from other provinces in search of employment.

While these relationships fuel Steve and Lisa's enthusiasm, there also are plenty of challenges in their life, perhaps the most daunting being language learning.

"Language at our age is really hard," Lisa said. "I took Latin in high school because I wouldn't have to speak it. I didn't take [a language] in college."

They invest the time to learn Chinese knowing God will open even more doors for them to be His heart, hands and voice when they can communicate in the heart language of those around them.

"The encouraging thing is that I [study so much] and feel like I am just struggling and not doing well. But, you know what? However I butcher this language, God is using us. And He is bringing people to us," Lisa said. "So having these relationships has made the struggle of language worth it."

It's interesting that the Lord has brought young people into their lives rather than people of their own generation.

Lisa points out that these are young people precisely the ages of their own children in the U.S., from whom they are so far away.

"It's not us," Lisa said. "God is preparing people and putting them in our path. And it's just amazing. It's just amazing."

Pray for divine appointments for Steve and Lisa, as well as acquisition of the Mandarin language.

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

**"God is preparing people and putting them in our path. And it's just amazing. It's just amazing."**

**Lisa  
Christian worker**

# Darker days ahead



IMB photo

A damaged police car leaves evidence of the angry sentiment of many secular Turks in Istanbul, Turkey.

## Turkish believers hope talk of freedom will open path for salvation

(continued from page 1)

protesters enthusiastically stated, “Erdogan should publicly apologize.”

She then admitted an apology is unlikely and darker days are probably coming to Turkey.

The exuberance on display in Taksim seems to mask a deeper uncertainty about the future of a country with a staunchly secular political system and a deeply religious Muslim majority population.

The size and scope of the protests have

surprised many, but they have not shaken the faith of Turkish believers.

Amir, a Turkish Christian pastor, said he had never seen anything like the recent demonstrations. He is confident that even if things turn out badly, God will prevail.

### Reason for hope

He said he prays human rights will be protected and that democracy will lead to an acceptance of others — specifically Christians so they can share their reason for hope.

Mehmet, a Turkish believer, said, “Jesus had similar experiences. He lived under oppressive leadership, but He walked among the citizens of Israel and addressed the real issue. The real issue isn’t about the government — it’s about salvation.”

He said he hopes discussions about freedom will open doors to share about the freedom that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Mehmet said he recognizes it is easy to get caught up in the frenzy of protests. He prays Turkish believers will have wisdom to discern the spiritual needs of their fellow citizens.

Join with Turkish Christians as they pray for the future of their country. Pray for Turkey Cities is a prayer guide that encourages in-depth prayer for the cities and peoples of Turkey. To order from the Resource Center of the International Mission Board visit <http://imbresources.org/index.cfm/product/detail/prodID/4100/page/1>.

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

**“Jesus had similar experiences. He lived under oppressive leadership, but He walked among the citizens of Israel and addressed the real issue. The real issue isn’t about the government — it’s about salvation.”**

Mehmet, Turkish believer

## Want to know God?

Pastor Craig Carlisle  
12th Street Baptist Church, Gadsden

Susan Seligson, who has traveled the world sampling breads, is upset people are eliminating bread from their diet and adding it to the “bad for you” list of foods. Author of “Going with the Grain: A Wandering Bread Lover Takes a Bite Out of Life,” Seligson wrote an article for *Globe* magazine in protest of the Atkins-inspired “low-carb” diet. She points out that bread has an 8,000-year track record for sustaining life. She also points to an assortment of bread stuffs in every culture on earth: bagels, biscuits, baguettes, boule, tortillas, chapatti, pita, matzah — on and on the list goes. She reminds us how often people come together to “break bread.” She points out that in Arabic the word for bread — *aysh* — is also the word for “life.” She closes by saying, “I wouldn’t want to live in a world without bread.”

You may think she has gone a bit over the top, but the point she is making is that bread is basic to life. It’s foundational to human health and happiness. It sustains. It nourishes. It comforts. It draws people together. It delights the senses. You can live without steak. You can live without ice cream. You can’t live without bread. Bread is essential.

And that is what Jesus says about Himself in John 6:25–35. I am essential to life. You can’t live without Me. Everything that bread represents to human beings — sustenance, comfort, identity, relationship, goodness — I am.

Later on in John 6:47–50, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.” Jesus is saying, “You don’t need manna. You need Me. You don’t need Moses. You need Me. You don’t need religion. You need Me.”

The people Jesus spoke to were not ready to admit they needed Him. They liked His miracles and teaching. They stumbled over the things people stumble over today. Don’t stumble. Come to Jesus. Only one thing is needed for this life and the life to come — personal faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of Life.

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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 resumé and inquiries to: bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

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Photo courtesy of Franklin Baptist Association

## Franklin Association moves into new building

Franklin Baptist Association held an open house May 5 to commemorate its move to a new building in Russellville. The facility located on Guard Street is a “good fit” for the association, said Larry Dover, director of missions for Franklin Association.

The property has an additional storage building that now houses the association’s tool truck used for disaster relief and other ministries.

(TAB)

## LETTERS



(continued from page 2)

Recovery is only for those addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. It is for that. But it is for so much more. Celebrate Recovery helps people with hurts, habits and hang-ups through the love of Jesus Christ. Just like an alcoholic or drug addict, an over-eater must realize his/her addiction to food. Admitting is the first step. Then there are steps that must follow.

I encourage any church who wants to see transformation in lives to consider beginning the ministry of Celebrate Recovery. It is greatly needed throughout our state. We must all take off the masks we wear in church, admit our shortcomings and seek support and encouragement from others. Only then, can we experience the lives God has created us to live.

Jody Baker  
Birmingham, Ala.

### ‘CHRIST AS THE HEAD’

I am writing in response to “A Statement from the Calvinism Advisory Committee” (June 6 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*).

I loved the article — I am a Calvinist, have been for 20 plus years and thought about writing to tell you of the harmony we experience here at the “Family of Families,” Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer.

I have never felt alienated or

ostracized due to my beliefs as a Calvinist. Although the first time I mentioned it to our pastor, I thought he was going to have a wreck. We were on a visit and it came up in casual conversation. He was, to say the least, astonished. We love each other and have mutual honor and respect. Could not ask for a better example of a pastor, (or) a true man after God’s own heart, than Bro. Morgan Bailey.

I am active in outreach and teaching of the Scriptures and have been since I first came to Canaan in 2003. I serve as a deacon with no problem whatsoever. My fellow servants all show me the greatest kindness and respect. Of course I have no agenda either. I simply hold that the Scripture in 1 Peter 3:16 is true and simply leave it at that.

We have a wonderful fellowship that shows what can happen when believers place Christ as the head and not a particular agenda. We are all on the journey, loving God, sharing life, serving others and showing Jesus to the world.

I just wanted the body of Christ to know.

Tony L. Fisher  
Birmingham, Ala.

## Can churches afford to strictly offer meeting places for Scouts?

(continued from page 3)

expectations of its own, but I was also told that chartered organizations could craft their own codes of conduct and that they could be stricter than the one BSA creates, so long as it does not violate the new membership policy,” Smith added. “Given this interpretation of the situation, I believe that it is possible, even desirable, for Baptist churches to continue to utilize Scouting as an outreach ministry of the church.”

The difference is churches can no longer afford to strictly offer the Scouts a meeting place, he

added, noting they must now involve members of the local congregation and set expectations for leaders consistent with the values of the church.

Among other reactions to the BSA policy change, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the top sponsor of the BSA, has indicated that it doesn’t object to the new policy.

United Methodist Scouting officials have said they would continue to support the BSA and Roman Catholic leaders have offered mixed responses, all according to RNS news reports.

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# The hungry in Alabama



Photo courtesy of Montgomery Baptist Association  
A volunteer stocks shelves at Forest Park Ministry Center of Montgomery Baptist Association.

## Alabama No. 3 in hunger nationwide; Baptists can help practically, through advocacy

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

As the “grocery clerk” for Washington Baptist Association, Mildred Butler said she hasn’t

always gotten a lot of thanks. But that’s changed over the past few years. “Since the economy has gotten worse, people who come to us say the bag of food we give them makes the difference of whether or not they eat the last week of

the month,” said Butler, ministry assistant and food ministry director for the association. Her office gives out food to nearly 300 families a month. The count has “steadily gone up as the economy’s gotten worse,” Butler said.

And it’s not just Washington County. Statistics say the food insecurity problem found there spans the entire state. In 2011, 18.2 percent of Alabama households struggled to put food on the table, compared to 14.9 percent of families nationwide, according to Bread for the World statistics. The year before, 26.7 percent of the state’s children were at risk of hunger. Add all that together, and experts say it means Alabama ranks No. 3 in hunger in the nation, ac-

ording to Bread for the World. Out of Alabama’s counties, Wilcox, Winston, Conecuh, Monroe and Marion have the highest rate of food insecurity, which means at least one member of a household has had his or her eating patterns disrupted by lack of money. Larry Barnes, director of missions for Fayette Baptist Association, said he sees the reality of food insecurity in his area all the time. The association’s food bank is open four and a half days a week to people who have no food. “Our churches contribute food items and money,” he said. “They feel it is important because jobs are scarce and they know that those whom we are helping are very likely to be completely out of food.”

Like Fayette Association, other Alabama Baptists statewide are working to meet hunger needs on a practical level, said Kristy Kennedy, an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). Twenty-three Alabama Baptist associations have food banks that received hunger funds from the SBOM, with 14 more food ministries added to that, she said.

**Other ministries**  
“And these are just the ministries that ask us for hunger funds, so there are more groups than this” who do food ministry, Kennedy said. Washington Association is one ministry that receives money from

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***“In obedience to our Lord, we should all attempt to help those who have need.”***

**Washington Baptist Association website**

the World Hunger Fund through the SBOM to help run its food distribution project.

Butler said, “The things that used to help you stretch your dollar now have gotten more expensive — rice, potatoes, the ‘fillers in,’” so people are having a harder time putting food on the table.

So over time, Washington Association moved from running a “small pantry” giving away 50 bags of food a month to a bigger operation that receives food from the regional center of the Alabama Food Bank Association (AFBA). The AFBA has eight locations in Alabama that provide goods to emergency food programs such as food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters.

“In obedience to our Lord, we should all attempt to help those who have need,” the Washington Association website states. Providing food for the hungry is a big part of that, it said.

For Barbour Baptist Association, many of their calls come from families in crisis by way of DHR.

Calls come “when clients there are applying for food stamps and

don’t have any food, but they won’t get their card (for food stamps) for another seven days,” said Donna Harrison, administrative ministry assistant for Barbour Association.

The association’s food bank is on site and stocks “strictly canned foods donated from individuals and churches,” Harrison said. “If we are running low, all our churches step up to the bat.”

**Sporadic requests**

Requests for food come often but in spurts, she said. “One week, I’ll have to fill bags for three or four families. Other times, we might go two weeks and not have any.”

It’s a good working partnership between the association and DHR to meet needs, Harrison said.

But Alabama Baptists can go one level greater when it comes to reaching out to government to meet hunger needs, said LaMarco Cable, deputy director of organizing and grassroots capacity building for Bread for the World.

“I believe ending hunger in the United States and around the world requires a partnership



Photo courtesy of Russell Baptist Association

Volunteers help with the hunger ministry at the Baptist Center of Russell Baptist Association.

between community and government,” he said. “Feeding programs do an excellent job of responding to immediate needs.”

But the government “is able to respond immediately and create long-term solutions to ending hunger with input from church and community leaders,” Cable said.

Advocacy, he said, tops the

list of ways to respond to hunger needs.

“Critical decisions are being made in Congress that will impact poor and hungry people in Alabama and around the country,” he said.

Cable said he strongly encouraged Alabamians to contact their senators and urge them not to cut programs for the poor and hungry.

“Also encourage them to work with their colleagues to set a goal and plan for ending hunger in the United States,” he said.

For more information about Bread for the World and advocacy for the hungry, visit [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org). For more information about Alabama Food Bank Association, visit [www.alfoodbanks.org](http://www.alfoodbanks.org).

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 16

## Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson Jr.

Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

### WHO SAID LIFE WOULD BE FAIR? Job 15:5-20; 16:19-21; 19:5-27; 21:7-9

The text of Job records monologues expressing theological musings from Job's friends. Last week, we read how Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar explained Job's sufferings. Each man called for his friend Job to repent. After all, they posited, this is a cause-and-effect world. Suffering was the consequence of Job's transgressions.

In our high-tech age of blogs, tweets and instant-access videos, voices cry out with opinions about everything. Worldviews of all sorts are communicated, as well as a variety of non-Christian, post-Christian and what's-a-Christian perspectives. Tolerance is the modern mantra, arguing that fairness requires all views to be considered equally valid. Whether from a biblical character or a modern-day blogger, not all opinions about God are accurate.

Job explains to his companions that they are wrong in assuming that God's justice is always served within one's lifetime. God never declared that life is fair. In fact, if we were to hold God to fairness, then there would be no room for grace, mercy, compassion, forgiveness or unconditional love. Job confronts the worldview of his companions, though they do not receive his words well.

### You Might Be Misunderstood (15:5-20)

Eliphaz misunderstands Job. He suggests that Job speaks arrogantly, as though he knows the wisdom of God, or worse, that the man of Uz is judging God. Like the soliloquies in the earlier chapters, Eliphaz chooses to find fault with Job, accusing his friend of claiming more knowledge than the village elders who are older than his father. In this monologue, he concludes by offering his own theological wisdom, reinforcing the cause-and-effect arguments of last week's outline.

When we speak truth and share Scripture, people are offended. When we witness the glorious gospel of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, people are offended. As we look

at this passage, we may be offended. Eliphaz speaks with a measure of truth, and Job becomes offended. The problem here is that he presumes to speak for God against Job.

### You Might Be Ignored (16:19-21; 19:5-27)

This first passage in this section is Job's answer to Eliphaz. Reading chapter 16, one can see that Job is wearied by the continual blathering of his companions. He calls them "miserable comforters" (16:2), telling them he would offer them comfort and encouragement if they were in his position (16:5). In verses 19-21, Job speaks as a man who understands the intermediary role of Christ: "my advocate is in the heights." These words foreshadow the words of John (1 John 2:1).

Bildad later speaks, and Job responds to him in chapter 19. Even if his accusers are right regarding Job suffering under God's judgment, they have no right to consider themselves better than he is. Job uses the verbs "torment" and "crush" (19:2), "humiliate" and "mistreat" (19:3) to characterize their words. He continues by describing his physical condition, then concludes the response with another expression of faith.

Job, the patriarch of Uz, expresses belief in the concepts of life after death (13:15), supernatural mediation (16:19-21) and resurrection (19:25-27). He confesses hope in his Redeemer (*go'el*), the same term used for the one who takes on the debt of a widow in order to provide for her (Ruth 2-4). Though the book contains no references to Israel or the Law of Moses, Job indicates an understanding of salvation by faith. His faith is ignored by his companions.

### You Might See Others Go Unpunished (21:7-9)

Job observes that God's judgment is not always immediate. Often, the wicked prosper and the unjust thrive in their sins. Justice cannot be defined by our terms in our timetable. If solely looking at life from a human perspective, one might conclude that life is unfair, that crime does pay and that the wicked do go unpunished. But God is just. ❏

## Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard

Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

### GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE Exodus 3:7-10; 12:12-13, 29-31; 14:5-6, 13-14, 21, 26

#### God Cares (3:7-10)

The cast of characters in Exodus 1-2 was tailor-made for one of Cecil B. DeMille's cinematic gems. Pharaoh and his daughter, Moses and Miriam, the Israelites and their taskmasters, all of these play their part in the events of these chapters. One character, though, remains conspicuously absent from the scene: God. As Jacob's family spirals from welcomed guests to hated slaves, Jacob's God is said to have done little more than give families to the midwives who refused Pharaoh's terrible charge. In this moment of crisis, God seems curiously estranged from His people.

God's people seem equally estranged from Him. As Pharaoh first enslaves and then attacks the Israelites, we read no word of prayer, no plea for help to God. The midwives again are said to have feared God, but nothing more is said about the Israelites' devotion to God. Jacob's descendants have grown in number as they have sojourned in Egypt, but they have also grown distant from the God who brought them there.

All of this will change in the final verses of Exodus 2. There, the text says, "The Israelites groaned because of their slavery, and they cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery rose up to God." Note that the text does not actually say the Israelites prayed for help. It says merely that they groaned. They cried out, and that cry finally reached the ears of Israel's God. The four verbs that follow form the heart of the exodus story: God heard their groaning. God remembered His covenant. God looked upon the Israelites. God knew.

This last verb is especially meaningful. The sense of the Hebrew *yada'* (to know) runs much deeper than merely knowing facts or even being acquainted with another person. It is the word used as a euphemism for sexual relations in phrases such as "Adam knew his wife, and she conceived." It is a word that expresses intimacy and in this context gives the

reader the sense that God Himself has experienced the pain of His children's suffering. From this moment, the exodus was an accomplished fact. Neither Moses' objections nor Pharaoh's resistance would hinder God's determination to free His people. As He says in Exodus 3, "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them."

#### God Judges (12:12-13, 29-31)

Standing in the way of deliverance was Pharaoh. When God announced His determination to free His people, Moses naturally assumed their release would happen immediately. With divinely inspired boldness, he strides into Pharaoh's throne room in Exodus 5 and declares, "Let my people go." He appears unprepared for Pharaoh's negative response: "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go." When Pharaoh refuses, Moses is reduced to begging, "Please let us go."

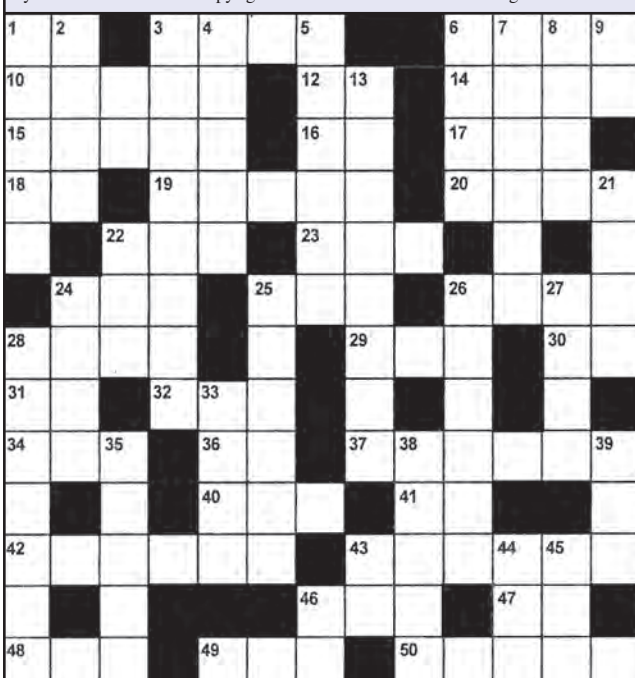
After God has struck Egypt with plague after devastating plague, this situation will be reversed. Now Moses declares in hot anger that it is Pharaoh and his officials who will bow before him (Ex. 11:8). And when the firstborn are struck, it is Pharaoh who plaintively begs Moses, "Bless me," as he gives the Israelites their freedom (Ex. 12:32).

#### God Delivers (14:5-6, 13-14, 21, 26)

The exodus itself is hurried and quiet. It is only once the people have been delivered through the sea that they can finally pause and reflect on their freedom. Preserved in the celebration of Passover, this act of deliverance would become a perennial subject for reflection. Reaching beyond that one band of freed people in that one moment in time, the exodus would be remembered as an act of liberation for all of God's people for all time. Some three millennia later, when a child at a Passover meal asks the Four Questions, the faithful still say, "*Avadim hayinu*," "We were slaves," and "*va-yotsi'enu*," "but he delivered us." ❏

## Christian Crossword

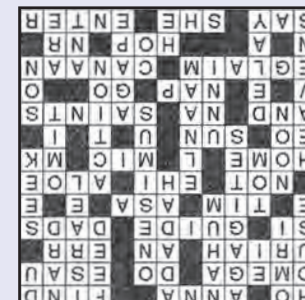
By Deborah Justice Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

- \_\_\_\_\_, come forth, and flee. (Zech. 2:6)
- \_\_\_\_\_, a prophetess. (Luke 2:36)
- But a faithful man who can \_\_\_\_\_? (Prov. 20:6)
- Alpha and \_\_\_\_\_ . (Rev. 1:8)
- To put into action.
- Jacob's brother. (Gen. 27:6)
- Bathsheba's first husband. (2 Sam. 11:3)
- Make thee \_\_\_\_\_ ark. (Gen. 6:14)
- To make a mistake.
- Spanish for "yes."
- And the Lord shall \_\_\_\_\_ thee. (Isa. 58:11)
- Male parent. (plural)
- Short for Timothy.
- And he went out to meet \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Chron. 15:2)
- In no way.
- A son of Benjamin. (Gen. 46:21)

- \_\_\_\_\_ vera lotion.
- A family's dwelling place.
- Book between Jonah and Nahum. (abbr.)
- Missionary kid. (abbr.)
- Ex officio. (abbr.)
- For the Lord God is a \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 84:11)
- This \_\_\_\_\_ that.
- Not applicable. (abbr.)
- And love unto all the \_\_\_\_\_. (Eph. 1:15)
- A brief sleep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ ye therefore, and teach. (Matt. 28:19)
- The howling thereof unto \_\_\_\_\_. (Isa. 15:8)
- Come into the land of \_\_\_\_\_. (Lev. 14:34)
- Jump on one foot.
- No report. (abbr.)
- To express in words.
- Opposite of 46 Down.
- Strive to \_\_\_\_\_ in. (Luke 13:24)
- In my Father's \_\_\_\_\_. (John 14:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ to reign over Israel. (1 Kings 16:23)
- Haman the \_\_\_\_\_(s). (Esther 8:3)
- Jonah, Micah, \_\_\_\_\_. (Josh. 15:22)
- \_\_\_\_\_ my sheep. (John 21:16)
- That is to be ruler in \_\_\_\_\_. (Mic. 5:2)
- Box of ointment of spike \_\_\_\_\_. (Mark 14:3)
- Dutch. (abbr.)
- For my son \_\_\_\_\_. (Philemon 10)
- It is time to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord. (Hos. 10:12)
- Thomas. (nickname)
- Midday.
- Joshaviah, the sons of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 11:46)
- Movement.
- To leave out.
- Thus the \_\_\_\_\_ and the earth were finished. (Gen. 2:1)
- Shemiramoth, and Jehiel and \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 15:20)
- Postpone.
- Greek word meaning "love."
- Thou art my \_\_\_\_\_. (Heb. 1:5)
- A prefix meaning "jointly."
- Go to the \_\_\_\_\_, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
- We \_\_\_\_\_ going to attend church on Sunday.
- \_\_\_\_\_ brought me up also out of a horrible pit. (Ps. 40:2)



## Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

### LifeWay announces VBS theme for 2014

NASHVILLE — Kids will become Agency D3 — discover, decide, defend — special agents during LifeWay's Vacation Bible School (VBS) 2014 as they collect and log evidence about Jesus.

Using their best high-tech operative skills, they will examine eyewitness reports, physical proof and biblical accounts to uncover and defend the truth about who Jesus really is. By collecting all the evidence they will discover the truth of the gospel; decide to believe it; and then defend that decision.

"D3 is an investigative agency organized to discover if Jesus is really who He claims to be and if the Bible is true," said Jerry Wooley, LifeWay's VBS specialist. "We have put together one of the most fun, investigative and high-tech VBS themes ever."

Beginning Oct. 1, LifeWay will offer a Jump-start Kit for pastors and VBS directors. Materials included in it will help with planning, enlistment, publicity and decorations.

LifeWay will offer VBS leaders several opportunities for training, including preview events in January and February 2014.

LifeWay will host seven preview events to get churches and VBS leaders ready for their events: Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center, Jan. 10–11; Fort Worth, Texas, Jan. 17–18; LifeWay home office in Nashville, (three events) Jan. 30–31, Jan. 31–Feb. 1, Feb. 1; and Kissimmee, Fla., (two events), Feb. 7–8, Feb. 8.

The VBS 2014 theme verse is 1 Peter 3:15: But honor the Messiah as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

### Page writes book about daughter's suicide

NASHVILLE — "I love you, Daddy." "I'm so proud of you." Melissa Page Strange had written the sentiments on yellow sticky notes to her father Frank Page, hiding each separately in boxes of books she helped him pack during a move. He would discover them more than a year later while settling in his office as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, months after Melissa had committed suicide at age 32.

"Oh, how I missed my little Melissa in that moment," Page writes in "Melissa, A Father's Lessons from a Daughter's Suicide," which was released June 1. The book arrives as the Christian community is becoming more aware of mental illness within the body of Christ, the same year Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren lost his son Matthew to suicide at age 27 after a lengthy battle with mental illness.

In "Melissa," Page shares his story of love interspersed with Scripture, biblical wisdom and advice for families dealing with suicide and potential victims contemplating the act.

"I hope that the readers will grasp the realness of the story, the admission that no one is perfect as well as the correct theology that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ," Page said.

### CP continues slightly above budgeted goal

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are \$1,468,759.46, or 1.17 percent, above the year-to-date budgeted goal, and are 1.63 percent behind contributions received during the same time frame last year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Frank S. Page. The total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 2012–13 SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget.

As of May 31, gifts received by the Executive Committee for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$126,802,092.82, or 101.17 percent of the \$125,333,333.36 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$2,107,447.14 less than the \$128,909,539.96 received through the end of May 2012.

### Baylor receives record \$35 million gift from alum

WACO, Texas — Baylor University recently received a \$35 million gift, the largest gift from a living alumnus in the school's history. The gift by Texas oilman Paul Foster, a 1979 Baylor graduate, will go toward construction of a new \$100 million facility to house Baylor's Hankamer School of Business.

The new 275,000-square-foot facility will be named the Paul L. Foster Campus for Business and Innovation. Part of the fund also will support Baylor Stadium, a new \$250 million riverfront football stadium approved by trustees in 2012.

# 'Great faith'

## Memphis Grizzlies' forward Daye in 'constant prayer' for his mom

By Bill Sorrell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Austin Daye came into the world as a high-five. He was born at 5:55 a.m. on June 5 and weighed 5 pounds, 5 ounces. The Memphis Grizzlies forward wears jersey number 5.

"It's my mom's lucky number," said Daye, who was at Gonzaga University where he was a first-round NBA draft pick in 2009.

"I am glad that I am in this situation now in Memphis," said Daye, 24. "I feel like it is a good fit for myself. I feel the guys have really embraced me, so I like the situation a lot."

There is another situation that Daye is in now, and it requires him to embrace his faith.

His mother, Tamara Daye, has multiple sclerosis (MS), a chronic, progressive nerve disorder that affects movement.

"I think that everything happens for a reason, and it is all through God's plans," Austin Daye said.

When his mother was first diagnosed with MS when he was nearing his senior year at Woodbridge High School in Irvine, Calif., "a lot of things turned," he said.

"I knew I had to help her as much as I could," he said. "When you go from being a kid in high school to being a man in high school, it changes a lot of things."

He doesn't know the stage of his mother's disease. "She keeps it from me, which is kind of disturbing," he said. "I respect her decision what to tell me and what not to tell me."

While Tamara Daye has gotten better, there are limitations to what she can and can't do, including being outside in the heat. During the season, when Austin Daye is more than 1,800 miles away from her Oceanside, Calif., home, he checks his cellphone first thing after practice to see if she has phoned.

"I'm always there for her," he said.

During the summer, when he is working out in Las Vegas or living in Los Angeles, he visits her weekly but doesn't assist in her injections.

"I don't like needles," he said.

### 'A tough time'

There was a time when Daye was struggling with his game and not having a good season. It was the year his mother was going through "a tough time" with MS.

"That distracted me from basketball," he said. "I just tried to speak to Him (Christ) as much as I could and pray about a lot of things."

Before entering games, Austin Daye, who is in "constant prayer" for his mother, kisses his WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) rubber band bracelet. He has not taken it off in the year and a half he's had it.

"Through my mom I have learned that it is good to keep the faith," said Austin Daye, who reads the Bible via iPad. "It definitely helps when she is going through hard times. ... Being a Christian has always kept me on a level course. It's always been a part of me."

He doesn't have a favorite Bible verse.



Photo by Ronald Martinez/NBAE via Getty Images

### Austin Daye

"I feel like if I have one that I always like, I'll always go back to that one," he said. "I want to find new things that I like."

While Austin Daye doesn't have a church home in Memphis, he attends church with his mother when he is in California. He has taken to heart her advice as she has dealt with MS.

"She always told me to stay humble and be happy for what God has given me," he said.

### Great role model

His father, Darren Daye, played in the NBA for five seasons with Washington, Chicago and Boston and in leagues in Italy, Israel and France before retiring in 1997.

A role model, Darren Daye, who lives in Newport Beach, Calif., has helped his son in every aspect of the game.

Throughout Austin Daye's career, he has learned more about himself.

"You see a lot of guys coming into the league at 20, 19 and 21 like I did," said Daye, who is 6 feet 11 inches and weighs 205 pounds. "As they get into the NBA, they grow into men. Your personality evolves. Your faith evolves. Your skills evolve."

Grizzlies point guard Mike Conley calls Daye "a lights-out shooter" who has an immediate impact.

"He helps us in a lot of different areas stretching the floor," Conley said.

Daye leads the team in 3-point field goal percentage (.421) and has averaged 4.5 points per game and 2.2 rebounds in 12.4 minutes.

Quincy Pondexter, a Grizzlies guard/forward, is a Christian as well.

"We both have great faith," Pondexter said. "We are both trying to help others out as much as we can. He is handling it (his mother's MS) great. He holds it in, but he is always positive, always upbeat. How he carries himself goes a long way. I really look up to him."

Austin Daye, who plays a lot of video games and likes to bowl, helped distribute 1,500 pairs of shoes to needy Detroit children through Samaritan's Feet. He also helped with food distribution events in Detroit through Feed The Children during Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. In Memphis, he has visited children at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and during the summer he conducts a basketball camp for children in Irvine.

"I want to try to be the best person I can be. Not really the best athlete. Not really the best teacher," he said. "Just try to be the best person I can be as far as touching other people's lives and helping people whenever I can." ❏



Sara Groves

Photo courtesy of Fair Trade Services

# Walking with **Christ**

## Musician Sara Groves puts faith into action

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**S**inger-songwriter Sara Groves is on a mission — to help audiences gain a deeper understanding of God's love for His children. And by doing more than just singing songs at her concerts, Groves is challenging audiences to grow in their walk with Christ.

"When I'm performing concerts, I feel a specific calling to challenge people to take that next step with God, because every single person has a place to go in their walk with Christ," Groves said.

"I'll discuss different issues and then pose questions like: 'What are we doing to make an impact on others? Are we being fully devoted followers of Christ? What areas in our lives are we holding back from Christ? If we really applied the gospel at every level of our lives — friendship, marriage, parenting — what would that be like?'"

"I sometimes feel that God puts harder subjects on my heart, so it's not a typical concert experience. I want to encourage people to explore God and who He is."

To encourage people to reach out and make a difference in the lives of others, Groves often

shares information about a variety of missions organizations at her concerts, including Food for the Hungry and International Justice Mission (IJM).

Groves has traveled to Washington on behalf of IJM to advocate for victims of human trafficking, meeting with congressional aides.

Desiring to meet needs in Jesus' name, Groves also partners with prison ministries and performs concerts for women inmates.

She noted the women there defy stereotypes and do not fit neatly into any single category.

"This is always the biggest surprise for anyone who visits. Our prison populations are made up of a diverse group of men and women who are in desperate need to hear the gospel and have their lives changed."

### Christ's love

"Each experience and missions trip has taught me so much about how many people are hurting around the world and need to hear about Christ's love.

"I was just a typical soccer mom well into my suburban life when God convicted me that I wasn't being the Good Samaritan. If anything I was being like the man on the other side of the road. It was then that I realized I needed to take action, step out of my comfort zone and share Christ's love with those in need." ❧

***"When I'm performing concerts, I feel a specific calling to challenge people to take that next step with God, because every single person has a place to go in their walk with Christ."***

Sara Groves  
singer/songwriter

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### ELCA Lutherans elect first openly gay bishop

GLENDALE, Calif. — The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has elected its first openly gay bishop, R. Guy Erwin, to oversee churches in Southern California, four years after the church allowed openly gay men and lesbians to serve as clergy.

Following a wider trend within other mainline Protestant denominations to appoint gays and lesbians to leadership positions, the ELCA's five-county Southwest California Synod elected Erwin on May 31 to a six-year term.

Erwin, who holds a doctorate, bachelor's and two master's degrees from Yale University, has spent several years teaching university and seminary classes. He currently serves as a pastor at Faith Lutheran Church, Canoga Park, Calif., and as a professor of Lutheran confessional theology at California Lutheran University.

Part Osage Indian, Erwin also is the first Native American bishop in the ELCA.

The election is likely to further strain relations between the ELCA and the nation's second-largest Lutheran body, the more theologically conservative Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Erwin will serve alongside the first openly lesbian Episcopal bishop, Mary Glasspool, who was elected as a suffragan (assistant) bishop in Los Angeles in 2009.

### Missouri governor vetoes 'anti-Sharia' bill

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri's governor vetoed legislation June 3 that some were calling an anti-Sharia law bill, keeping Missouri from becoming the seventh state to prohibit judges from considering foreign laws — including Islamic law — in their decisions. The legislation, Senate Bill 267, passed both chambers in May to create a Civil Liberties Defense Act mandating that any court, arbitration, tribunal or administrative agency ruling would be unenforceable if based on a foreign law that is "repugnant or inconsistent with" the Missouri and U.S. constitutions.

While supporters said it would prohibit unforeseen invasions of Sharia law, the legislation did not specifically mention the Islamic legal tradition. It also exempted corporations that have agreed to abide by foreign laws.

Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, said he vetoed the bill because it "seeks to introduce a solution to a problem that does not exist and, in so doing, puts in jeopardy some of the very liberties that the bill purports to protect." What drew the most attention from the governor's veto explanation was his contention that it would have "a chilling effect on foreign adoptions."

### Attempt to legalize gay 'marriage' defeated in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — The Illinois House of Representatives adjourned for the session without voting on gay "marriage" May 31, an acknowledgement it lacked the votes to pass in what was a defeat for gay "marriage" groups after a string of victories.

Six states legalized gay "marriage" in the last seven months, including three in May alone. It was thought Illinois might join that list and become the 13th to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples, but the bill never made it to a floor vote.

It had passed the Senate 34-21 in February, and Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn had pledged to sign it. But despite Democrats having a super-majority in the House, the bill lacked the necessary support. President Obama and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel had called on the Legislature to approve the bill.

Illinois already recognizes civil unions, which grant same-sex couples all the legal benefits of marriage, minus the name.

### Americans waste 1.3 billion tons of food each year

VATICAN CITY — Americans throw away 30 percent of their food every year. And approximately 1.3 billion tons of food — one third of the world's total food production — are lost or wasted every year, according to data provided by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization.

On World Environment Day, June 5, the United Nations launched an anti-food waste campaign and Pope Francis denounced what he called the "culture of waste" of modern economies, especially when it comes to food. "Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of those who are poor and hungry," he said during his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square.

"Consumerism has made us accustomed to wasting food daily and we are unable to see its real value," Francis said, comparing this attitude to the frugality of "our grandparents" who "used to make a point of not throwing away leftover food." ❧