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BP photo

For more than 500,000 stateless South Sudanese living in neighboring Sudan, the road ahead is unclear. Can they leave? Will they be forced to leave? Are their rights being officially curtailed? They daily face these questions and more.

'Recipe for disaster'

'Stateless' South Sudanese Christians vulnerable in north

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is calling attention to the statelessness of people of South Sudanese origin who are living in Sudan amid human rights abuses, including a lack of religious freedom.

Since South Sudan gained independence in 2011, the Sudanese government has not recognized the citizenship of nearly 500,000 Southerners still living in the north. Meanwhile Sudan has implemented sharia Islamic law, which harshly impacts Christian Southerners.

"It is a potential recipe for disaster that after more than two years of discussions, half a million

Southerners in Sudan remain stateless and vulnerable to severe religious freedom violations," USCIRF chair Katrina Lantos Swett said in a news release July 9.

USCIRF is calling on the U.S. government and its allies to "increase their efforts to help Sudan and South Sudan resolve the status of their nationals residing in the other's territory."

"Southerners in Sudan are at a particularly grave risk," Lantos Swett said. "Furthermore failure to finalize negotiations has left them vulnerable to expulsion."

The independence of South Sudan "must not be used as a justification for the denial of reli-

(See 'Looking,' page 4)

Baptist Youth World Conference in Singapore urges 'renewal of faith'

Life in Christ is not about rules or systems but relationships, urged German Baptist youth leader Christian Rommert, as he spoke to youth gathered in Singapore for the 16th Baptist Youth World Conference.

Rommert cautioned against "going through the motions (of worship) without the inner motivation" and against "having the habits of faith without the heart of faith" in a morning meditation kicking off the second day of the July 17-21 event.

Denise de Vasconcelos Araujo, elected first female president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Youth Department in 2008, opened the gathering with a welcome and roll call of the more than 60 countries officially represented at the event. BWA General Secretary Neville Callam urged the approximately 2,500 youth "to defy the destructive secularism that seeks to push religious faith to the fringes of society" and to "let the world know the undeniable truth that faith in Jesus Christ is alive and well."

Youth also were reminded that a commitment to justice is part of the call to being Christian.

Wado Saw, a Myanmar refugee in the Mae La camp on the Thai-Myanmar border, testified to the difficulties faced by the tens of thousands of refugees from Myanmar who have been displaced due to conflicts in their homeland. Despite their desire for home, it is unlikely that their dreams will be realized anytime soon.

On each day of the conference, youth delegates gathered in the Global Village to interact with each other and engage in cultural exchanges.

'Fringe stage'

The Village comprised exhibition booths, a "fringe stage" for youth to display their artistic talents and a social media center where they can upload and share media content while conference events stream live.

Callam expressed hope that those attending the conference would "find opportunity for the renewal of your faith as you hear stories of young people from around the world whose lives are being transformed through their fellowship with Christ." (ABP)



BWA photo

BCM **BAPTIST
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Coming next week:
Alabama college students make an impact across the world



COMMENT

A Lifelong Companion for a Lifelong Journey

Be-coming a Christian disciple is not an easy task. Yes it begins with a conscious decision to be a follower of Jesus. But becoming a disciple — a student of Jesus — is a lifelong journey.

Learning the teachings of Jesus is only the beginning. Knowing the implications and applications of those teachings and incorporating them into one's life is a vital part of Christian discipleship.

Jesus said, "If you hold to My teachings, you are really My disciples" (John 8:31). James, the half-brother of our Lord, added, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). Knowledge and action, faith and works always go together.

Some have called Christian discipleship a "process." It involves regular Bible study, disciplined prayer times and faithful obedience resulting in personal growth as a student of Jesus. If one were to draw a graph of the process, it would show peaks and valleys but the trend line would be generally upward.

For many Alabama Baptists, a valuable resource in the process of becoming a Christian disciple is their state Baptist paper. For generations, the state Baptist paper has been called "a lifelong companion for a lifelong journey." Flowing from its pages week after week are stories that capture the heart, articles that refresh the spirit, information that challenges the mind and reports that build up the body of Christ.

One week *The Alabama Baptist* may help one appreciate how Baptists understand a particular Scripture passage. The next week an article may provide insight into a pressing moral issue by examining it through the lens of biblical principles.

A report in *The Alabama Baptist* about what God is doing in a distant part of the world may help one value the way Baptists work together to share the good news of Jesus. The next week the state Baptist paper may rally Baptists to minister to an immediate community need.

Informs, interprets, inspires

Information about a typical family crisis may provide new insights that help a family cope amid stress and pressure. The information may spark ministry ideas for a church desiring to serve in Christ's name to people caught in difficult circumstances.

Week after week after week *The Alabama Baptist* informs, interprets and inspires and week after week after week readers take steps, sometimes ever-so-small steps, on the upward way of Christian discipleship.

Helping Alabama Baptists grow in their Christian discipleship is not accidental. The vision statement for the state Baptist paper says, in part, that the paper "will help empower Bap-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

tists of Alabama ... to live out the biblical concepts of Christian discipleship."

For 170 years the state Baptist paper has been dedicated to serving Alabama Baptists so this people of God can better serve the Lord. That is part of the reason the paper has been called "a lifelong companion for a lifelong journey."

While *The Alabama Baptist* focuses primarily on developing individual Christian disciples, it continues to make invaluable contributions to thousands of local churches. The state Baptist paper is the only missions publication providing important, reliable, up-to-date information about Baptists in the state, in the nation and around the world. Its stories illustrate the implications and applications of Bible teachings.

Regular reading helps lift the missions vision of a congregation beyond the boundaries of a local community to include the ends of the earth. Articles and stories help develop an appreciation for Baptists and other Christian believers who serve God elsewhere, often in difficult circumstances.

Consistent attention to what Baptists believe and how Baptists work together helps flesh out what it means to be a Baptist and enables churches to practice cardinal Baptist teachings such as the Lordship of Christ, the primacy of Scripture, the priesthood of all believers and autonomy of the local church.

The state Baptist paper promotes all that Baptists do together — benevolent ministries such as the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries; special missions offerings for state, national and international missions; and ministries such as disaster relief efforts.

Through reading *The Alabama Baptist*, generations have formed a sense of identity as a convention of believers. In his book, "Alabama Baptists:

Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie," Wayne Flynt wrote, "Next to the colleges, no institution was more important to the emerging denomination than *The Alabama Baptist*. The paper communicated news, provided a forum for debate, publicized associational meetings and state conventions and generally welded disparate Baptists into a well-informed cooperative unity."

Such contributions to Baptist churches and the convention as a whole over the years of its existence are the kinds of contributions *The Alabama Baptist* continues to make today. Perhaps that is why studies show churches providing the state Baptist paper as part of its Christian resources for active resident families have members who give more to missions, on average, than churches that do not. Studies also show that churches that include the paper participate more in convention activities than churches that do not include the paper among their resources.

The value of regular reading of *The Alabama Baptist* to the believer's walk with the Lord is unquestionable. So is the importance of the state Baptist paper to a church when active members use the state Baptist paper as a resource in their growth as Christian disciples. The resulting significance to the convention of strong individual Christians and healthy local congregations is obvious.

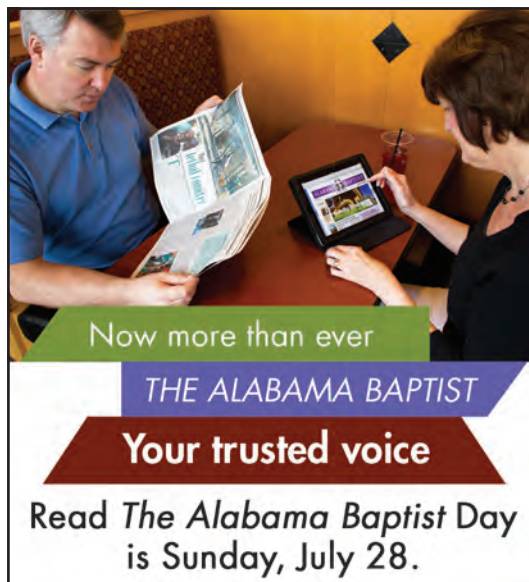
That is why the ministry of the state Baptist paper is vital and why the Alabama

Baptist State Convention sets aside a special day each year to emphasize the role and contribution of this unmatched resource. No other ministry can do what *The Alabama Baptist* does for individual believers, for cooperating churches and for the convention as a whole.

About three out of four Alabama Baptist churches include the state Baptist paper among resources provided to active resident families — at least for those who request it. If your church is among them, be sure to read the paper each week. Encourage those not receiving the paper to sign up today by contacting the church office.

If your church does not include the state Baptist paper for active resident families, you can subscribe individually by contacting the state Baptist paper. Better yet, you can ask church leadership to include it. After all, *The Alabama Baptist* is "a lifelong companion for a lifelong journey" for believers who are serious about being students of Jesus.

For more information, visit www.thealabama-baptist.org or call 1-800-803-5201.





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

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Photo by Joey Compton

(Left to right) Kendall Watkins, Madeline Weaver, Claire Lehane and Julia Ann Bratton work on art pieces in Susan Compton and Russell Murer's chronological Bible study Sunday School class at Liberty Park Church, Vestavia Hills. The art is placed on the walls to create a biblical timeline.

'More than ... a story'

Liberty Park teaches children chronological timeline, context of Bible

By Neisha Fuson and Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Do you remember the significance of the 12 tribes of Israel? What about the promises given to Moses and his descendants? And what about the prophecies of Christ's coming found throughout the Old Testament?

They are all part of one big story that points to Jesus, and Russell Murer and Susan Compton say it's vital to understand the Bible that way.

That's why, when they found that type of cohesiveness lacking in the children's Sunday School curriculum at Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, they decided to do something different.

"The curriculum we used bounced around a lot," said Murer, who noticed the children knew the stories of the Bible but didn't understand "how the Bible actually works."

Compton also saw similarities between current curriculum and curriculum used when she was in Sunday School nearly 40 years ago.

How the Bible fits together

As they did back then, now "we talk about Jesus's birth at Christmas and His death at Easter, as we should, but otherwise we [teach] Noah one week and Moses the next and Elisha the next," Compton said. "[The students] have no context of when all this happened and how it all fits together."

That realization prompted Murer and Compton to begin teaching the Bible in order, and now the two co-lead a chronological third- and fourth-grade Sunday School class.

Along with using "The Gospel Project for Kids," a three-year chronological plan of study produced by LifeWay Christian Resources, the co-teachers wanted to use a timeline in their classroom as a visual reminder of the figures,

places and events of the Bible. After an unsuccessful search for a thorough and interesting timeline, Compton said, "We just made our own."

Every Sunday, Compton begins the lesson with a time of review. Murer then teaches the next story in the chronological study and another volunteer, Julia Bratton, helps the children create a craft or piece of artwork to add to the timeline on the walls of the classroom.

"[The kids] will staple their own work on the wall ... that serves as a reminder of what happened in each book of the Bible," Murer said. "By the end of the year the wall is very full."

Nate French, associate pastor at the Birmingham Baptist Association church, said the class is "well attended."

"Susan and Russell and Julia are very prepared and (teach a lesson that is) very well thought out," said French, who thinks "The Gospel Project for Kids" has been vital because it "allows students to study every story from the Old Testament to the New Testament not only in chronological order but in the context of the gospel message."

And Compton sees a clear difference in what the students remember now as opposed to a few years ago.

"It's amazing how much [the timeline] helps them remember," she said. "It gives them something to spark their memory of what we've been talking about."

Murer agreed and said the students have "an understanding of where their religion came

from and why." The chronological study, he said, has given the Bible "a context and more of an authenticity."

"It's more than just a story," he said.

And it's more than just for children — French said the church has used the chronological method in adult classes, too.

It's effective for any age, said Steve Evans, a specialist in oral communication who has written chronological Bible storytelling curriculum for the International Mission Board and other organizations.

He noted that research shows a majority of high school and college graduates say they will never pick up another book in their life, but all adults enjoy hearing stories, especially if they continue to build on each other toward a climax.

"Chronological Bible storytelling in evangelism, Sunday School, home and student Bible studies is proving very effective," he said. "When God's Word is presented

chronologically, people begin to see the movement of God in history, and the pieces fall together and make sense for them."

And from a teacher's perspective, it's a method that's fun, enjoyable and memorable, he said.

Stories "are easy to learn and easy to reproduce," Evans said. "This isn't about head knowledge — it's about the language of the heart. Stories speak from the heart, and they speak to the heart."

For more information about "The Gospel Project for Kids" or "The Gospel Project for Adults," visit www.gospelproject.com. ❧



Photo by Joey Compton

Charlie Heidepriem works on a piece of artwork in his Sunday School class.

As strangers in a foreign land, many who are not citizens of South Sudan contemplate what their role in society will be or if they are even welcome in the country.

Looking for peace



IMB photo

Southern Baptists urged to 'stand in the gap and ask God to resolve the statelessness'

(continued from page 1)

religious diversity and freedom in Sudan, or as a justification to delay progress on a resolution of the status of Southerners in Sudan," USCIRF said.

South Sudan has offered citizenship to Sudanese residents but the government of Sudan has not reciprocated.

Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the situation in Sudan should concern American Christians.

"Every one of our churches should be heartbroken and driven to prayer for our brothers and sisters in Sudan as Jesus commands us to do," Moore said in a statement to Baptist Press. "They are heroically carrying the name of Christ, to the point of homelessness and peril of death.

"Our Sudanese brothers and sisters recognize what all of us should learn, that cross-bearing isn't mere metaphor," Moore said. "I commend the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom for calling attention to what's at stake here. Let's pray for and work for human rights and religious freedom in Sudan and around the world."

Shannon Lewis, a Southern Baptist representative in South Sudan, is praying for a spiritual awakening in the two countries.

"Our churches need to pray for the government leaders of both countries to make decisions based on Christ rather than their selfish initiatives. There are hurting people that have been running for years, trying to find peace and a place to call home," Lewis said. "As Southern Baptists, we need to stand in the gap and ask God to resolve the statelessness in these countries and ask Him to speak to us regarding the ways we can become engaged to help."

Tiffany Lynch, a senior policy analyst at USCIRF, told Baptist Press that when a peace agreement was signed in Sudan in 2005, about 2 million people of South Sudanese origin were living in Khartoum and surrounding areas of the north, mostly displaced by the 20-year north-south civil war.

About 1.5 million South Sudanese have returned to their homeland, but others have chosen to remain in Sudan because they are married to a Sudanese individual, have integrated into the country economically or were born during the war and have grown up in the north.

Still others have not returned because South Sudan, as a new nation, is unable to absorb everyone who would return by providing them with resources and services such as education and health care.

In some cases, the Sudanese government has shut

down the main passageway between the north and south, Lynch said, preventing would-be returnees from accessing South Sudan.

"So you have people who want to go back and just can't, and you have people who want to stay and continue their lives in Sudan," Lynch said. "Our concern is that these people want to stay in Sudan but Sudan is not providing them with the proper pathway to citizenship, which would allow them to stay there.

"Without that proper pathway, they have great difficulties in gaining and maintaining employment, access to some sort of residency. In addition to general human rights conditions, we see this as a major concern," Lynch said.

The Sudanese government frequently has violated the rights of Southerners, USCIRF said, including firing all Southerners employed by the government.

The vast majority of South Sudanese are Christian or animist, Lynch said, and the vast majority of Sudanese are Muslim. When South Sudan became independent, the Sudanese government saw no need to protect the religious freedom of Christians, she said.

As a result, churches during the past couple of years have been demolished by bulldozers or have received threats from government officials. Vi-

olence against Christian churches has been justified in the eyes of the government by the argument that those were South Sudanese churches, not Sudanese churches.

Because of their basic human rights, individuals should have the right to freedom of religion or belief just as they have the right to employment, education, health care and access to land, Lynch said.

Freedom of religion "includes being able to worship, being able to go to churches and build churches, being able to educate themselves and their children in the religion of their choice," she said. "Those rights have been infringed upon not just for Sudanese Christians but in particular for South Sudanese Christians."

Morning Star News reported July 12 that a Sudanese Christian fled the country after Sudanese officials roughed him up in Khartoum and threatened to kill him for not divulging the names of Sudanese Muslims who had converted to Christianity.

Apostasy is punishable by death in Sudan, but Morning Star News said Sudan has not executed anyone for that reason in nearly two decades. In 2011 and 2012, though, about 170 people were imprisoned and/or charged with the crime.

Another of USCIRF's concerns, Lynch said, is the threat that South Sudanese would be expelled from Sudan.

"We have not seen any mass expulsions, which we've been very pleased by, however we have seen increasingly sporadic efforts to arrest people, accuse them of Christian proselytization — which is illegal in Sudan — and then deport them to South Sudan," Lynch said. "So we haven't seen mass expulsions but we have seen this way around to expel people by claiming that they're proselytizing."

In September 2012, Sudan and South Sudan — in a Joint High Level Committee — agreed to move forward on citizenship negotiations, which were to focus on providing freedom of residence, movement, economic activity and property. No progress has been made, USCIRF said, and the agreement itself contains several concerns.

The agreement lacks a blanket statement that each nation must protect against statelessness, Lynch said. Also the agreement says the four freedoms in focus as well as other freedoms must comply with national laws.

"The Sudanese government is a gross violator of religious freedom and a lot of it is because of its legal structure, which promotes sharia law and Islamic law over everything else," Lynch said, adding that such laws automatically impact the rights of South Sudanese Christians.

USCIRF's Lantos Swett, in the July 9 news release, said, "It is imperative that the Joint High Level Committee not only fully resolves specific areas of concern from prior agreements but also ensures that the final agreement includes an explicit protection from statelessness and respect for universal human rights, including religious freedom."

Citizenship negotiations, Lynch said, have been overshadowed by oil agreements in Sudan and South Sudan as well as in the international community. Because there have been no mass expulsions of South Sudanese, "nobody is focusing on the issue of statelessness," Lynch said.

Expelling people

"The Sudanese government is finding a way to expel people in a quiet manner and infringing upon the rights of individuals as they're doing that," Lynch said.

In other independence movements, international norms have recommended either dual citizenship or the rights of option, which means a person can choose to which nation he wants his citizenship to belong, Lynch said.

"That's what we've advocated for, so if South Sudanese are not going to be allowed dual citizenship, which they're not, then at the very least they should be allowed to choose whether they want to be Sudanese or South Sudanese," Lynch said. "The Sudanese are not allowing them to have that decision."

Sudan's treatment of Christians and other human rights violations have caused it to be designated as a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999. (BP)

"Our churches need to pray for the government leaders of both countries to make decisions based on Christ rather than their selfish initiatives."

**Shannon Lewis
Southern Baptist
representative in South Sudan**

Can you keep your doctor?

From www.healthcare.gov:
“Depending on the plan you choose in the Marketplace (see story, page 6), you may be able to keep your current doctor.

“Most health insurance plans offered in the Marketplace have networks of hospitals, doctors, specialists, pharmacies and other health care providers. Networks include health care providers that the plan contracts with to take care of the plan’s members. Depending on the type of policy you buy, care may be covered only when you get it from a network provider.

“When comparing plans in the Marketplace, you will see a link to a list of providers in each plan’s network. If staying with your current doctors is important to you, check to see if they are included before choosing a plan.”

In 2010 President Obama said Americans would not have to give up their insurance nor their doctor if they wanted to keep one or both, so the word *may* in the above explanation is what has many concerned.

Reporters and bloggers are asking what it really means.

Potential for similar plans

Michael Patterson, vice president of legal services for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, said he anticipates insurance plans to be similar but deductibles to be higher.

Still only plans existing prior to March 23, 2010, are eligible to be “grandfathered” in as an optional plan, according to www.healthcare.gov. These plans do have to follow the guidelines of the new law such as ending lifetime limits on coverage, ending arbitrary cancellations and covering adult children up to age 26.

A few things they don’t have to do are: cover preventative care for free, guarantee your right to appeal, be held accountable for excessive premium increases nor protect your choice of doctors, according to www.healthcare.gov.

It is unclear how it all will play out because regulations are changing consistently as each segment of the law is implemented. (TAB)

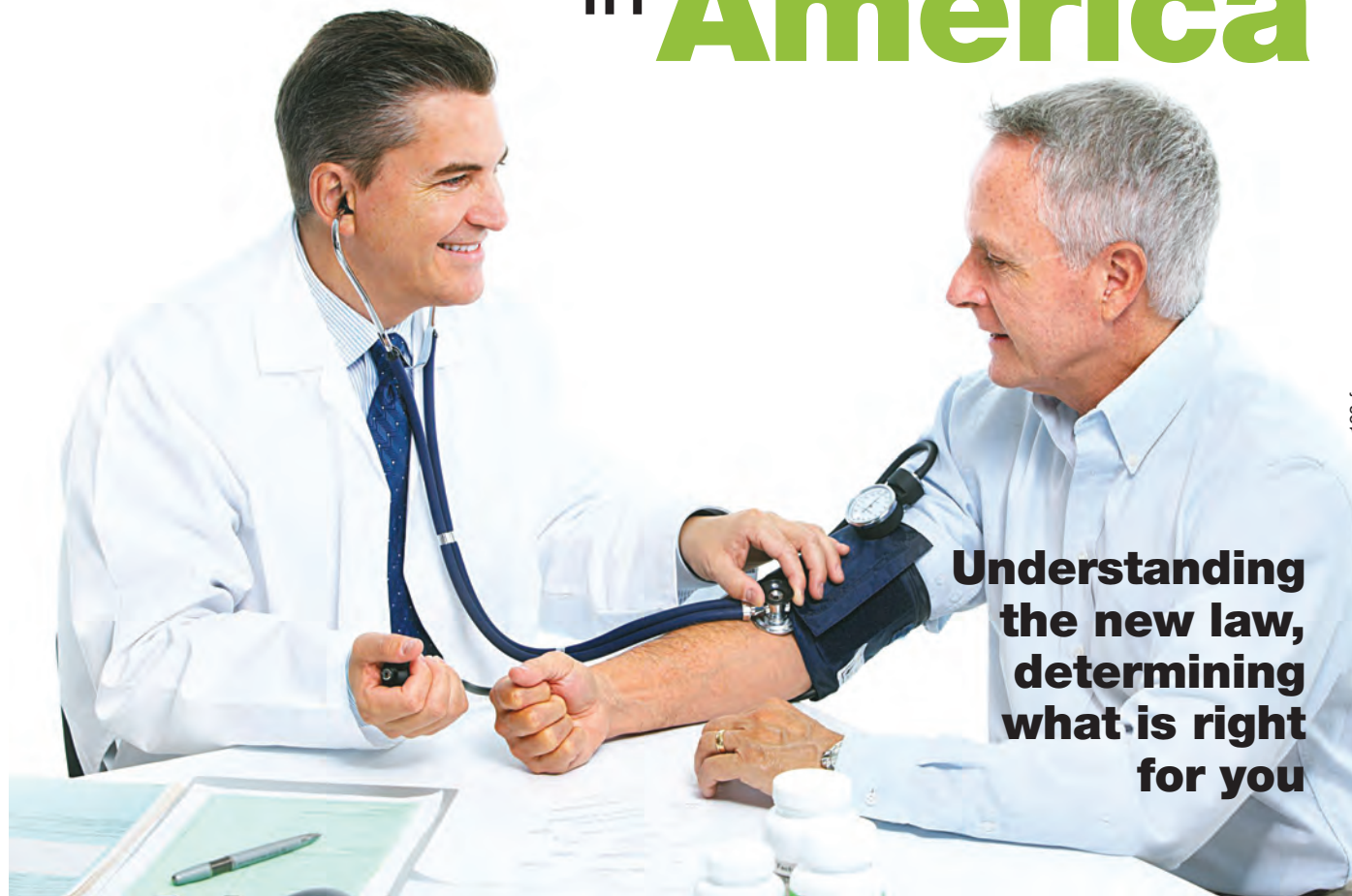
How to calculate number of employees

Does your business have 50 or more full-time equivalent employees? To calculate:

Full-time employee — works 30 hours or more. Each full-time employee counts as one equivalent.

Equivalent — The hours of part-time employees (those working less than 30 hours per week) are to be added together. Divide the total of part-time hours worked in a month by 130. Then add this number to the number of full-time employees to determine the total amount of equivalents. (TAB)

Health care in America



**Understanding
the new law,
determining
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Fourth of Six in a Series

Changes coming to health care for Americans through the Affordable Care Act have been researched and studied for more than three years, and health care and insurance experts tell The Alabama Baptist that it is a complex law that is difficult to understand. As each new segment is solidified and implemented, a ripple effect occurs and other aspects begin to line up and make sense, the experts explained.

For many Americans, the new law is overwhelming and extremely confusing.

To help Alabama Baptists understand the parts most vital to their lives, The Alabama

Baptist is publishing a six-part summer series continuing through July and August dedicated to explaining the basics of what needs to be understood in the Affordable Care Act. Deadlines for action and resources for making decisions also will be provided.

If you have specific questions or concerns about the changes coming to health care, please email those to news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 1-800-803-5201, ext. 103. If your issue is not addressed in the series, then we will do our best to research the answer for you in the final part of the series. (TAB)

Does your small business qualify for health care tax credits?

By Sondra Washington
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

To say that the new Affordable Care Act is complicated is an understatement. Portions of the law have been effective since early 2010, and many people — health care and insurance experts included — still don’t understand various portions of its policies and implications. But as the powers that be wade through the nearly 1,000-page law, there are some details that we do know. One of these is the small businesses tax credit, which has been available for the past three years but will change again starting January 2014.

Unfortunately for many small business

owners, pinching pennies is a way of life necessary to keep their companies afloat. At times, tough choices have to be made and some have had to forfeit providing medical insurance for their employees since the cost would be more than they could afford to pay.

An attempt to improve

According to the Alabama Department of Insurance (DOI), the health care reform act has been an attempt over the past three years to improve this problem. It has done this by offering business owners with less than 25 full-time employees and who “pay wages averaging less than \$50,000 per full-time-equivalent employee per year” a tax

credit of up to 35 percent of premiums paid when they provide medical insurance for their workers, according to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Nonprofit organizations can qualify for up to a 25 percent tax credit.

“The full (tax) credit [is] available to employers with 10 or fewer employees and average annual wages of less than \$25,000,” the DOI states.

Businesses with 50 full-time equivalent employees will be required by law to provide health care benefits by 2015. The original date of Jan. 1, 2014, was recently delayed to provide more time to prepare for the new requirement. Yet smaller businesses have no such obligations.

(See ‘Smaller,’ page 7)

Health care marketplace



123rf.com

Various options, prices will be offered in online health care shopping experience

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

It may be similar to shopping for your favorite book or household item on Amazon.com or purchasing that wedding gift on Target.com.

A prototype of exactly how it will look has not been made public, but insurance experts do know the new health care insurance exchange system will be a web-based shopping experience.

These “health insurance marketplaces,” called the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), will provide consumers and small businesses a form of “one-stop shopping ... to buy insurance from qualified health plans available through a marketplace,” according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

With the new exchanges, “every health insurance plan in the new marketplace will offer comprehensive coverage, from doctors to medications to hospital visits. You can compare all your insurance options based on price, benefits, quality and other features that may be important to you in plain language that makes sense,” according to www.healthcare.gov.

Self-employment

Like small businesses and nearly every other segment of the population, self-employed individuals also are set to see changes in their health insurance options through the Affordable Care Act. These changes, which are either currently in place or planned for the upcoming year, deal with individual shared responsibility provisions, individual insurance marketplaces, Medicaid expansion coverage and Medicare assessments, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. Look for more information on these issues in an upcoming issue of this series. (TAB)

Companies with fewer than 100 employees also will be allowed to shop in the health insurance Marketplace although they will not receive the tax credit available to small businesses (see story, page 5).

While the initial hopes were for states to set up their own SHOP Marketplaces, 26 states including Alabama declined to participate in the exchange plan.

In a Nov. 13, 2012, press release, Gov. Robert Bentley stated, “I am not going to set up a state-based exchange that will create a tax burden of up to \$50 million on the people of Alabama. As governor, I cannot support adding such a tax burden onto our citizens.”

In states where a health care marketplace is not offered, individuals and companies will “apply for coverage, compare plans and enroll” through www.healthcare.gov.

It is unclear at this time exactly how this Marketplace will function, but more information about this portion of the act will be available in October 2013 through the website.

Some political analysts predict the Marketplace could be delayed to give the federal

government more time to set up the federal exchange. “When you use the health insurance marketplace, you’ll fill out an application and find out if you can get lower costs on your monthly premiums for private insurance plans,” according to www.healthcare.gov.

Apply to learn qualifications

“You’ll find out if you qualify for lower out-of-pocket costs. The marketplace will also tell you if you qualify for free or low-cost coverage available through Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP),” the website explains.

And to help educate consumers on the the new Marketplace, a group of people trained to assist anyone needing help — Navigators — are currently being selected.

As far as what plans will be available

through the Marketplace, that information is not yet available.

Michael Patterson, vice president of legal services for Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) of Alabama, said all insurance companies interested in providing a plan in the federal Marketplace had to submit their plans by May 3.

Speaking during the *Birmingham Business Journal’s* Health Care Reform Panel Breakfast on July 11, Patterson confirmed that BCBS will be part of the exchange.

“We don’t know who the others are,” he said. “We won’t know until September.”

Patterson also explained that some insurance companies are purposefully waiting to submit plans for the Marketplace.

“Some insurance companies are holding back right now because it is anticipated the very sick are going to be the first to buy insurance the first year,” he said. (Jennifer Davis Rash contributed)

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— **Allen Drew, Crossroad Baptist Church**

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7 key terms

in the Affordable Care Act that small businesses should know

By **Meredith K. Olafson**
U.S. Small Business Association

The Affordable Care Act includes new health care reform terms used to describe parts of the law that affect small businesses. Understanding what these terms mean can help both self-employed individuals and small employers better navigate the law and take advantage of reforms that are helping to lower premium costs and increase access to quality, affordable health insurance.

Here are seven terms in the Affordable Care Act that small businesses should know.

1. Affordable Insurance Exchange

Also known as the health insurance “Marketplace,” the Affordable Insurance Exchange is a new transparent, competitive insurance marketplace where individuals and small businesses can purchase affordable and qualified health benefit plans. The Marketplace for small employers, known as the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), and the Individual Marketplace for consumers and those who are self-employed, will open in all states Jan. 1, 2014. Enrollment begins Oct. 1, 2013.

2. Employer Shared Responsibility

Although employers are not required to provide health coverage to their employees under the Affordable Care Act, employers of a certain size will be subject to the Employer Shared Responsibility provision of the law. Under this provision, beginning in 2015, business owners with at least 50 full-time or full-time equivalent (FTE) employees that do not offer health coverage to their full-time employees may be subject to a shared responsibility payment under the health care law. A full-time employee is generally one who is employed an average of 30 or more hours per week. Businesses with fewer than 50 full-time or FTE employees are generally not affected by these provisions.

3. Essential Health Benefits

The Affordable Care Act ensures that health plans offered in the individual and small group markets, both inside and outside of the health insurance Marketplace, offer a comprehensive package of items and services known as essential health benefits. Essential health benefits must include services within at least 10 core categories, among them emergency services, maternity and newborn care, prescription drugs and preventive and wellness services. For more information on these requirements, visit healthcare.gov.

4. Individual Shared Responsibility

The Individual Shared Responsibility provision of the law applies to the self-employed and requires that each individual, beginning in January 2014, have basic health insurance coverage (known as minimum essential cover-

age) for each month, qualify for an exemption or make a payment when filing a federal income tax return starting in 2015. Individuals will not have to make a payment under these rules if coverage is unaffordable, they spend less than three consecutive months without coverage or they qualify for an exemption for several other reasons, including hardship and religious beliefs. To learn more, visit www.treasury.gov or consult with your tax professional.

5. Premium Tax Credits

When enrollment through the health insurance Marketplace starts in October 2013, consumers and self-employed individuals may be eligible for a new kind of tax credit you can use right away to lower what you pay for your monthly health plan premiums. Individuals who qualify can take the premium tax credit in the form of advance payments to lower their monthly health plan premiums starting in 2014, which can help make insurance more affordable. The value of the tax credit an individual is eligible for depends on how much income is expected to be earned. To learn more, visit healthcare.gov.

6. Small Business Health Care Tax Credits

Although the Affordable Care Act does not require that businesses provide health insurance, it does offer tax credits for eligible small businesses that choose to provide insurance to their employees for the first time or maintain the coverage they already have. To qualify for a small business health care tax credit of up to 35 percent, the business must have fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees, pay average annual wages below \$50,000 and contribute 50 percent or more toward the employees' self-only health insurance premiums. In 2014 this tax credit goes up to 50 percent and is available to qualified small businesses that purchase coverage in the SHOP Marketplace.

7. Wellness Programs

A wellness program is defined as a program intended to improve and promote health and fitness that is typically offered through the workplace, although insurance plans can offer them directly to their enrollees. The program allows for employees to be offered premium discounts, cash rewards, gym memberships and other incentives to participate.

The Affordable Care Act creates new incentives to promote employer wellness programs and encourage opportunities to support healthier workplaces. To learn more, visit healthcare.gov.

For more information and an extensive list of key terms under the health care law, consult this glossary provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and visit www.healthcare.gov.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article first appeared on www.sba.gov and was reprinted with permission. Meredith K. Olafson is senior policy advisor for the U.S. Small Business Administration where she oversees the agency's education and outreach efforts around health care and the Affordable Care Act. ☞

'Smaller the business, bigger the credit' for health care

(continued from page 5)

“If you are a small business, you’ll claim the credit as part of the general business credit on your income tax return,” according to an IRS YouTube video. “Also since the credit will be less than the full amount of your premium payments, you may be eligible to claim a business expense deduction for the difference.”

This credit, which took effect January 2010, has reportedly saved some small business owners across the country up to \$7,000 depending on the size of their companies and the amount of medical insurance premiums they paid. It is expected to provide “\$40 billion in relief for small firms over the next 10 years,” www.healthcare.gov reports.

The IRS offers an example of how this credit may apply to businesses:

“If you pay \$50,000 a year toward workers’ health care premiums — and if you qualify for a 15 percent credit, you save \$7,500. If you save \$7,500 a year from tax year 2010 through 2013, that’s total savings of \$30,000.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website states, “Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, but high health care costs and declining coverage have hindered small business owners and their employees.

“Over the past decade, average annual family premiums for workers at small

firms increased by 123 percent, from \$5,700 in 1999 to \$12,700 in 2009, while the percentage of small firms offering coverage fell from 65 to 59 percent.”

In 2014 the tax credits increase for small businesses and nonprofit organizations participating in the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Marketplace (see story, page 6). The increase potential is up to 50 percent for small businesses and 35 percent for nonprofits.

According to www.healthcare.gov, the tax credit is highest for companies with fewer than 10 employees who are paid an average of \$25,000 or less.

“The smaller the business, the bigger the credit,” the website states.

Small business owners can find out if they qualify for the health care tax credit by visit-

ing www.irs.gov or consulting with an accountant or tax adviser.

For more information on small business tax credits and the Affordable Care Act in general, visit www.healthcare.gov, which contains extensive explanation of the health reform law.

Individuals also can receive updates about various coverage options through this website.

For information on automatic enrollment, employer responsibility and waiting periods, visit www.dol.gov/ebsa/newsroom/tr12-01.html. ☞

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, but high health care costs and declining coverage have hindered small business owners and their employees.”

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website

Hobby Lobby granted preliminary injunction, saved from large penalty

Hobby Lobby has won further relief from a massive penalty as it challenges the Obama administration’s contraception mandate.

A federal judge in Oklahoma City granted a preliminary injunction to Hobby Lobby on July 19, sparing the popular arts and crafts chain from a penalty that could have reached \$1.3 million a day. The order bars enforcement while the case proceeds, challenging a controversial rule from the Department of Health and Human Services that requires employers to pay for coverage of contraceptives, including ones that can cause abortions.

Hobby Lobby and Mardel, a sister Christian bookstore chain, filed suit in 2012 against the rule implementing the 2010 health care reform law. Members of the Green family — evangelical Christians who own Hobby Lobby and Mardel — do not oppose all contraceptive methods, only those that have abortion-causing qualities. The federally approved drugs in question include Plan B and other “morning-after” pills including “ella,” which works in a fashion similar to the abortion drug RU 486.

After federal judge Joe Heaton granted the injunction July 19, Hobby Lobby President Steve Green explained his company’s position.

“This case is about life; our deeply held conviction is that life begins with conception. To offer prescriptions that take life is just not an option,” he said, according to *The Daily Oklahoman*.

In his opinion Heaton said, according to the Becket Fund, which is representing Hobby Lobby in the case, “There is a substantial public interest in ensuring that no individual or corporation has their legs cut out from under them while these difficult issues are resolved.”

Heaton originally refused to grant a preliminary injunction, but the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed his decision June 27 and instructed him to reconsider. The court said Hobby Lobby and Mardel had demonstrated they probably would prevail in showing that the mandate infringes on their religious freedom. On June 28, Heaton issued a temporary restraining order preventing the mandate from going into effect July 1 and sparing the chains from the penalty. (BP)

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BIRMINGHAM

▶ **Charlie Martin** has returned to **NorthPark Church, Trussville**, as associate pastor of worship, where he previously served from 2000 to 2006. Martin most recently served as minister of music for **Calvary Church, Tuscaloosa**



MARTIN

(2006 to 2008 and 2009 to 2013). He served as worship pastor for **Riverside Church, Denver, Colo.**, between his stints at Calvary. Martin also previously served **Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery**, and **Hilldale Church, Birmingham**. A graduate of **Mississippi College** and **New Orleans Theological Seminary**, Martin is currently working on a doctor of educational ministry with an emphasis in worship studies at **New Orleans Seminary**. He and his wife, **Lisa**, have three children.

CALHOUN

▶ **Hill Crest Church, Anniston**, will host "One Frees One" on Aug. 3, 6 p.m. The event's purpose is to raise awareness about human trafficking and to support **The Wellhouse**, a program that rescues and restores victims. For more information, call 256-283-9894 or email hwatson@jsu.edu. **Rick Reaves** is pastor. ▶ **Mount Zion Church, Alexandria**, will begin hosting **Divorce Care** on Aug. 21. The new ministry will meet every Wednesday, 6:30-8 p.m. in the **Fireside Room**. Child care will be provided. For more information, call 256-820-3931. **Garry Ragsdale** is pastor.

CHILTON

▶ **Mount Carmel Church No. 1, Thorsby**, will celebrate homecoming July 28, 10 a.m. To **The End from Syclacauga** will provide special music, with **Larry Patterson**, of **Bay Minette**, as the guest speaker. Lunch will follow. **Derrell Jones** is pastor.

COFFEE

▶ **Damascus Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming July 28. The **Benton Brothers** will sing at 10 a.m. and **Faron Golden** will share the message at 11 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will follow. For more information, call 334-894-0600. **Mack King** is interim pastor.

CONECUH

▶ **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will hold revival July 28-31 with 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. services Sunday and 7 p.m. ser-

vices Monday through Wednesday. The theme will be "Hope for America" featuring speakers **Joe Godfrey**, **Phil Winningham**, **Mike Green** and **Dale Huff**. For more information, call 251-578-1024. **Jim Griffin** is pastor.

DEKALB

▶ **First Church, Rainsville**, will host **Christian comedian/musician Bill King** as **Brother Billy Bob Bohannon** on July 29, 6:30 p.m., as part of the church's **Magnificent Mondays**. **Jeff Mann** is pastor.

ETOWAH

▶ **Eric Sexton** is the new collegiate/student minister for **Etowah Association**. He is a graduate of **New Orleans Theological Seminary**. He and his wife, **Laura**, have two children. The association also has called **Richard Brad-**



SEXTON

field as the new church development director. He will be serving part-time as he continues to serve as pastor of **Stowers Hill Church, Attalla**. He is a graduate of **New Orleans Seminary**. He and his wife, **Cynthia**, have one daughter.

FRANKLIN

▶ **Danny Knight** will serve his last Sunday as interim pastor of **First Church, Russellville**, July 28. The church will honor him with a breakfast reception in the fellowship building at 8:45 a.m.

GENEVA

▶ **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will hold revival Aug. 4, 6 p.m. and Aug 5-7, 7 p.m. The speaker will be **Travis Free** and the music will be led by **Walter Wilson**. **Adam Hubbard** is pastor.

MADISON

▶ **Carter's Grove Church, Hazel Green**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary during its Aug. 11 homecoming service. Special music will be provided by **4Given** at 10 a.m. and **Phil Winningham** of the **Alabama State Board of Missions** will speak at 11 a.m. The church also will hold revival services Aug. 4-7 with **Charlie Howell**, **Madison Association**

director of missions, at 6 p.m. on Sunday and 7 p.m. Monday-Wednesday. Nursery will be provided. **Billy Taylor** is pastor.

MOBILE

▶ **Woodridge Church, Mobile**, will celebrate its 30th anniversary with "Old Fashioned Day" on Aug. 25, 10:30 a.m. Attendees are encouraged to wear old fashioned clothing — men in overalls, women in hats, etc. The church's first pastor, **Bob Vereen**, will speak. There will be a concert by the church choir/orchestra at 6 p.m. **Mack Morris** is pastor.

MUD CREEK

▶ **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will host **The Scrap Iron Quartet** on July 28, 1:30 p.m. **Johnny Thacker** is pastor.

MUSCLE SHOALS

▶ A team from **Muscle Shoals Association** served on a missions trip June 15-21 in **Eufaula, Okla.** A group of 56 people from seven churches, one in **Morgan Association**, traveled to **Big Arbor Indian Church** to wire and **Sheetrock** the new sanctuary. The team also held a backyard Bible club and revival. **Robert Smith** is director of missions.

SAND MOUNTAIN

▶ **Charles Smith** will celebrate his 50th year as an ordained pastor. **East Brow Church, Flat Rock**, will honor him Aug. 4, 2-4 p.m.

SULPHUR SPRINGS

▶ **Bethel Church, Dora**, will host "Pure Harmony" of **Haleyville** on Aug. 4, 6 p.m. **John Foles** is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

▶ **Larry Cummings** is the new pastor of **Wayside Church, Alexander City**. He holds a bachelor of ministry degree from **Baptist Bible Institute** (now the **Baptist College of Florida**) in **Graceville**. He previously served as director of missions for **Covington Association** and as pastor of **Westview Church, Opp**; **Bellwood Church**; and **Northside Church, Ponce de Leon, Fla.** He also has served on the **Alabama State Board of Missions'** executive committee. He and his wife, **Genia**, have three children and four grandchildren.



CUMMINGS

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian in Pakistan imprisoned for 'blasphemy'

LAHORE, Pakistan — A court in Pakistan sentenced a Christian to life in prison July 13 for alleged blasphemy of Islam in spite of the complainant retracting the accusation and admitting police pressured him into making it, his attorney said.

Prosecutors at the court in **Toba Tek Singh District** in **Punjab Province** produced no evidence that 29-year-old **Sajjad Masih** denigrated the prophet of Islam and that Islamist mobs pressured the judge into the conviction and verdict.

Gojra police arrested **Masih**, of **Pakpattan**, on accusations that he had sent text messages mocking Islam's prophet, **Muhammad**, to Muslim clerics and others in **Gojra** on Dec. 11, 2011.

Attorney **Javed Sahotra** said **Masih** had evaded repeated attempts to arrest him after learning of the accusations against him, but that on Dec. 28, 2011, area Christian leaders accompanied him to the **Gojra City Police Station** so that he could record a statement.

Some young Muslim men in **Gojra** had plotted against **Masih** to "punish him for being friends with a local Christian girl," **Sahotra** said. It was not clear what interest the Muslims had in **Masih's** love relationship with a fellow Christian, but the complainant in the case lives in her neighborhood. Prosecutors claimed that the young woman, **Roma Masih**, had broken off a marriage engagement with **Sajjad Masih**, and that in vengeance he had used a mobile phone SIM card purchased in her name to send blasphemous messages. She has since reportedly gone to the **United Kingdom**.

The complainant in the case, **Tariq Saleem**, said under cross-examination that he had not received any blasphemous text messages as he originally claimed, **Sahotra** said.

Police officers pressured **Saleem** to file the case after Islamic clerics had pressured them, **Sahotra** said. Questioning why the clerics themselves were unwilling to file a case, he pointed out that the accused Christian does not live in **Gojra** and would not have known the numbers of the Muslim clerics and others there who were said to have received the supposed text messages.

Sudanese authorities track down converts from Islam

JUBA, South Sudan — A Sudanese Christian has fled the country after authorities in **Khartoum** threatened to kill him for refusing to divulge names of converts from Islam, sources said.

The Christian, a native of **Sudan's Juba Mountains area**, left the country in June after officials from the **National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)** forced him to report to their offices nearly every day since raiding his home Feb. 23.

The detained Christian, whose name is withheld for security reasons, said officials, some of them armed, took him to jail Feb. 23 for interrogation after confiscating his passport and other documents, cell phone, computer, two laptops, iPad and the mobile phones of his brother and sisters.

That night they took him to his workplace in **Khartoum** and seized papers and \$310, he said. After visiting another site of his workplace the next day, a Sunday, the **NISS** officials accused him of being a spy for insurgents in the **Nuba Mountains** and said he and another Christian taken into custody would therefore be killed in accordance with Sudanese law.

Freedom of religion is a key provision of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, to which Sudan is a signatory. But "apostasy," or leaving Islam, is punishable by death in Sudan under Article 126 of its 1991 Criminal Act, according to the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**.

Sudan has not executed anyone for apostasy in almost two decades, but in 2011 and 2012 nearly 170 people were imprisoned and/or charged with the "crime," according to **USCIRF**.



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Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries

FOCUS on ONE Mission

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

Praying Across Alabama Campuses



- * There are 21 million of them in the United States and close to 300,000 of them in the state of Alabama.
- * They consider themselves spiritual but not religious.
- * They may be the most "connected" generation in history.
- * They are seeking authentic answers to life's questions.

Who are "they"? Alabama's colleges and university students.

Matthew 9:35-38 tells us that Jesus looked at the crowds and had compassion for them because they "...are weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd" and says to his disciples "The harvest is abundant but the workers are few. Therefore pray..."

One of the most, if not the most, important mission fields in our world today lies within easy reach of most Alabama Baptists: our college and

university campuses. With thousands of students from all over the U.S., Alabama college and university campuses are an unbelievable mix of all kinds and types of students including more than 7,000 international students from all over the world. Alabama Baptists have an amazing opportunity to reach students for Christ and to minister to them through Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) and through church collegiate ministry efforts.

Alabama Baptists have an amazing opportunity to reach students for Christ...

As thousands of students get ready to head to campus this fall, Alabama Baptists can play a critical role in reaching and ministering to students on

the college campus mission field. Let's come together to pray for revival on campuses across our state.

You can join with pastors, associational leaders, youth ministers, Woman's Missionary Union leaders, and church and campus ministers as we Pray



By Mike Nuss
State Missionary

Across Alabama Campuses during the week of August 5-9.


Check out information on page 14 for Praying Across Alabama events at a campus near you, or you can organize a prayer event for a campus near you that doesn't already have a scheduled event.

Either way, join with Alabama Baptists to pray:

- for students to come to faith in Jesus Christ.
- for students to grow and mature in their faith during their college years.

- for students to live lives of purity and example in front of fellow students.
- for students to seek God earnestly for direction and guidance.
- for students to listen to and hear God's call for missions and ministry service.
- for campus ministers and church collegiate ministers as they minister to students.
- for faculty, staff and administrations on all our college campuses.
- for churches to invest in the lives of college students.
- for God to be glorified through all our efforts to reach and disciple students in Alabama!

For more information, please contact the Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 262, or (334) 613-2262, check with your local Baptist association for a Praying Across Alabama event near you, or visit www.prayingacrossalabama.org.



At the Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd. in Montgomery
Thursday, September 5, 10 am - 3:30 pm
9:30 - 10 - Check-in and refreshments

Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to www.alsbom.org/gad.

Get Acquainted Day

Regional Sunday School & Discipleship Leader Training

Great Commission Possible...Through Multiplied Ministries

SUNDAY SCHOOL & DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING IS COMING!

Choose the location and date that is best for you. Conferences begin at 8 a.m. Saturdays and conclude at noon. There are three one-hour conference times at each location with multiple topics for each age group. Go to the web pages below for more information or to register. Registration is \$5 per person before the early registration deadline, \$10 per person after the deadline.

North: Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens: August 17, 2013. **Early registration deadline:** August 15, 2 p.m. www.alsbom.org/north. **Contact:** State Missionary Daniel Edmonds, dedmonds@alsbom.org, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285.

South: Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile: August 17, 2013. **Early registration deadline:** August 15, 2 p.m., www.alsbom.org/south. **Contact:** State Missionary James Blakeney, jblakeney@alsbom.org, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 286, or (334) 613-2286.

NorthWest: Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals: August 24, 2013. **Early registration deadline:** August 22, 2 p.m., www.alsbom.org/northwest. **Contact:** State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, jbaldwin@alsbom.org, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240.

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

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR OUTSTANDING 2013 MISSION VOLUNTEER



The Office of Global Missions of the State Board of Missions would like to honor an Outstanding 2013 Mission Volunteer. YOUR HELP IS NEEDED.

Please think about lay people you know whom you feel are worthy of such recognition, and let us hear from you. We realize that there are many who could fit this requirement; however, for this purpose only one individual (or couple) will be selected.

Your recommendation will make a difference. The following information is required if a person (or couple) is to be considered:

1. The name, address and phone number of the person (or couple) being nominated.
2. The name of the pastor, church and association with address and phone number to which he/she/they belong.
3. A list of volunteer mission service: their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Uttermost where he/she/they have participated during the past five years, including locations and dates. (If the

nominee(s) has not served in at least three of the Acts 1:8 areas, please do not nominate that person.)

4. Statements supporting your nomination as **Outstanding 2013 Mission Volunteer** (why you feel he/she/they should be recognized in this manner).

5. Your signature with address, phone, church and association.

To access an Information Sheet and Nomination Application, go online to www.alsbom.org/missionsvolunteer.

If you do not have web access, request your Information Sheet and Nomination Application by contacting Ministry Assistant Virginia Gardner at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, or (334) 613-2238, vgardner@alsbom.org.

Requests may also be made by mail at: Global Missions Office, Attn: Virginia Gardner, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

No phone calls or e-mail recommendations and/or endorsements accepted! Nominations must be received, not postmarked, no later than Friday, September 20, 2013.

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



Church Planting Focus

Thursday through Saturday, August 22-24, 2013, Shocco Springs
Begins at 1 p.m. Thursday, concludes at 4:30 p.m. Saturday

COST: \$25 per person, which includes meals and lodging. Churches are encouraged to bring teams.

Basic Training Journey for church planters and those considering planting will be taught from the planter's point of view. We will also offer Churches Planting Churches training from the point of view of the sending church.

REGISTRATION: www.alsbom.org/churchplantingfocus or please contact Ministry Assistant Juliana Delgado at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 224, or (334) 613-2244.

FOCUS on One Mission

ROYAL AMBASSADOR SOAPBOX DERBY



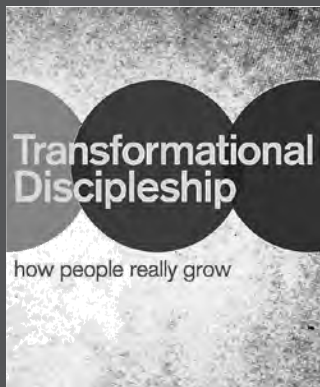
**OCTOBER 19, 2013, IN MONTGOMERY
DEXTER AVENUE IN FRONT OF THE STATE CAPITOL**

Register at 9 a.m., race begins at 10 a.m.
Registration Fee: \$10 per car (payable at the race)
Soapbox Derby Guidelines: www.alsbom.org/ra

For a free DVD with engineering drawings of the frame of the soapbox car; to order soapbox frame with steering linkage, axles, and braking system; or for other information: please contact Ministry Assistant Hannah Finch at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, hfinch@alsbom.org

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

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP CONFERENCE



September 26, 2013 • Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery
9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Check-in at 9 a.m.

Lunch will be served to those who pre-register. Please pre-register by September 20 at www.alsbom.org/transformationaldiscipleship. Books will be available for purchase onsite from LifeWay for \$7.50 each.

Presenter: Michael Kelley, co-author, director of discipleship at LifeWay

Facilitators: Dan Garland and Michael Gentry, LifeWay

For more information, please contact State Missionary Sonya Tucker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 271, or (334) 613-2271, stucker@alsbom.org.

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

Training Opportunities for Men's Ministry/Brotherhood Directors and Royal Ambassador Leaders

AREA TRAININGS:

www.alsbom.org/ra or www.alsbom.org/men

NORTH

Thursday, August 1: University Baptist Church, Huntsville. Training for RA Leaders. Part of WMU training. 7-9 p.m.

Thursday, October 3: Marshall Baptist Retreat Center, Guntersville. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6-8:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 24: Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

CENTRAL

Thursday, September 19: First Baptist Church, Jemison. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 7-8:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 3: Northwood Hills Baptist Church, Northport. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

Tuesday, October 8: Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

Thursday, October 10: First Baptist Church, Pelham. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

Thursday, October 17: Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Bessemer. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29: First Baptist Church, Fayette. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

SOUTH

Monday, August 26: Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile. Training for MM Directors and RA Leaders. 6:30-9 p.m.

STATEWIDE TRAINING:

Friday and Saturday, August 2-3: Part of The Summit: for Church Leaders training at Shocco Springs. Training for MM

Directors and RA Leaders. www.alsbom.org/summit

WMU REGIONAL TRAINING (includes RA Leader Training)

www.alabamawmu.org/regionaltraining – All trainings are from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, August 10: Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan

Saturday, August 17: Greenbrier Road Baptist Church, Anniston

Saturday, August 24: Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gordo

(Please note: These WMU dates were incorrectly reported in last month's Focus).

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Hannah Finch at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, hfinch@alsbom.org.

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

WHO KNEW? The First Three Weeks of College...

Transitions
Helping high school students take the next step in their faith journey.



What a student does during their first three weeks of college sets the pattern for his whole college career in the relationships he establishes and the patterns he develops.

Help lay the groundwork for Christlike college experiences by connecting yourself or your students with collegiate ministers by visiting www.onemissionstudents.org/transitions

Once you go to the webpage, enter contact information for yourself or your student. It takes less than three minutes and it will be networked to the campus of your choice!

Collegiate and Student Ministries • 1.800.264.1225, ext. 275 • (334) 613.2275

REACHING THE MANY FACES OF ALABAMA



2013 THE SUMMIT: FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Shocco Springs
Friday and Saturday

AUGUST 2-3, 2013
ONE WEEKEND ONLY

The Summit takes place at Shocco Springs, Friday and Saturday, August 2-3. This is training for all church leaders who work with any age group. Featured are seven one-hour training sessions on many different topics in church life and a worship time with State Missionary Bobby DuBois speaking on Friday afternoon.

If you have multiple responsibilities in your church, you will have a unique opportunity to grow in your knowledge about each of the areas in which you work. For example, someone who is an adult Sunday School teacher and also has an interest in learning about how to be involved in the evangelism aspect of the local church might attend an adult Sunday School leader session on Friday afternoon and then an evangelism session on Saturday.

Training will also be offered in discipleship, global missions, Woman's Missionary Union, men's ministries, Royal Ambassadors, church music and worship, and many other areas.

Online Information: www.alsbom.org/summit

Registration: www.shocco.org or 1-800-280-1105

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Ramona Noah at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 312, or (334) 613-2312, rnoah@alsbom.org.



MORE

Youth Evangelism Conference

THAN

Wright Center, Samford University | \$20 per person

A GAME?

www.onemissionstudents.org/yec

August
2-3, 2013



Chuck Hooten



Wade Morris



Barrett Jones * via video



youthevangelismconference



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

FOCUS on One Mission

V.E.L.C.R.O. CHURCH



ASSIMILATION CONFERENCES

Thursday, October 3, 2013:
 First Baptist Church, Athens;
 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 9, 2014:
 East Pointe Baptist Church,
 Spanish Fort; 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Registration:
www.alsbom.org/velcrochurch
Cost: \$10 per person (includes book and lunch). Check in begins at 9 a.m.

Speaker: Mike James
 For more information, please contact State Missionary Daniel Edmonds at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285, dedmonds@alsbom.org



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM IN A SENTENCE



— "We are a church committed to the Cooperative Program."
John Nicholson, pastor, Siloam Baptist Church, Marion (Cahaba Association)

— "I still believe in the Cooperative Program as a vital means to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and to support the Acts 1:8 mandate of serving as His witnesses locally, in surrounding areas and around the world."
Chip Starnes, pastor, First Baptist Church, Bay Minette (Baldwin Association)

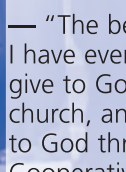


— "I am convinced Southern Baptists have yet to find any means or method that allows more people to share more directly with more spiritual needs than the Cooperative Program."
Rick Marshall, Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery (Montgomery Association)

— "Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for your heart for missions and understanding that together we are strong for the sake of the Kingdom."
Candace McIntosh, Alabama Woman's Missionary Union



— "More than 5,600 international missionaries, more than 5,300 North American missionaries and six quality theological seminaries training more than 16,000 pastors, missionaries and future church leaders are why I believe in the Cooperative Program."
Bill Wilks, Northpark Baptist Church, Trussville (Birmingham Association)



— "The best investment that I have ever made is when I give to God, through my church, and my church gives to God through the Cooperative Program."
Mike Shaw, First Baptist Church, Pelham (Shelby Association)



ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE LITERACY MISSIONS CONFERENCE

Friday through Sunday, September 13-15, 2013
 Shocco Springs

LITERACY MISSIONS ministries involve churches and associations in meeting the needs of adults who are nonreaders, low-level readers or non-English speakers, as well as children and youth who are at risk of failing in school. Come discover opportunities for intentional evangelism through literacy missions ministries.

Learn about our four areas of ministry: Adult Reading and Writing, English as a Second Language, Tutoring Children and Youth, and Bible Storytelling.

Learn how to:

- Organize a church or associational-based literacy missions outreach ministry.
- Understand students' needs and perspectives.
- Use language teaching techniques and resources.
- Share the Gospel with your students.
- Pray effectively for your students and yourself.

WORKSHOPS

- ARW - Adult Reading and Writing
- ESL - English as a Second Language
- TCY - Tutoring Children and Youth
- Bible Storytelling

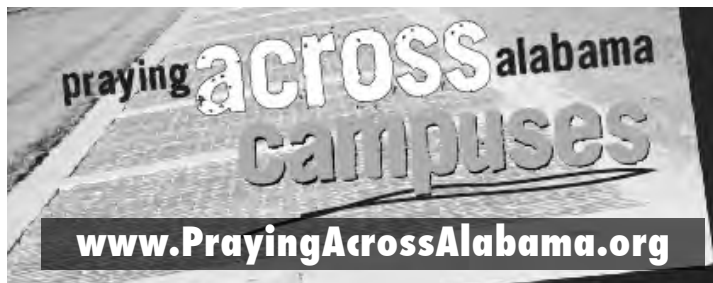
Each course is 14 hours in length.

We will also offer one-hour breakout sessions for our experienced teachers.

Registration:
www.alsbom.org/literacymissionsconference

For more information, please contact State Missionary Kristy Kennedy at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 311, or (334) 613-2311, kkennedy@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission



As thousands of students head to college and university campuses this fall — let's come together to pray for one of Alabama's critical mission fields. Join campus ministers, church collegiate ministers, youth ministers, WMU organizations, associational leaders and pastors as we **pray for revival on campuses across our state.**

If you have a Praying Across Alabama Campuses event that is not listed or if you would like more information on a specific event, contact Elissa Kilpatrick, ekilpatrick@alsbom.org or 1-800-264-1225, ext. 262; 334-613-2262.

Auburn University: Tuesday, August 6, 10:30 a.m. Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association Ministers Fellowship meeting and campus prayer walk, Baptist Student Center.

Saturday, August 10, 7 p.m. International prayer group meeting, Baptist Student Center.

Auburn University Montgomery: Monday, August 5, 11:30 a.m. Montgomery, Autauga and Elmore Pastors Luncheon at Baptist Student Center followed by campus prayer walk.

Calhoun Community College-Huntsville: Wednesday, August 7, 11:15 a.m. Prayer time, front entrance parking lot.

Jacksonville State University: Wednesday, August 7, 7 p.m. Prayer rally in front of Bibb Graves Hall.

Jeff State Community College-Hoover: Thursday, August 8, 10 a.m. Prayer rally, Health Science Building.

Shelton State Community College: Monday, August 5, 10:30 a.m. Tuscaloosa Baptist Association Pastors Conference meeting followed by campus prayer walk.

Southern Union Community College-Opelika: Thursday, August 8, 10:30 a.m. Campus prayer walk, Student Center.

Troy University: Monday, August 5, 8:30 a.m. Ministers Fellowship Breakfast followed by campus prayer walk, Baptist Student Center.

Tuesday, August 6, 10 :30 a.m. Prayer Rally focused on International Student Ministry, Baptist Student Center.

University of Alabama: Tuesday, August 6, 2:30 p.m. Prayer Tea for Tuscaloosa WMU Ladies at Baptist Student Center.

Wednesday, August 7 Local youth ministries are invited to the Baptist Student Center to prayer walk the campus.

University of Alabama-Birmingham: Tuesday, August 6, 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Campus prayer walk, Baptist Student Center.

University of Alabama-Huntsville: Tuesday, August 6, 11 a.m. Ministers Conference with campus prayer walk then lunch out as a group. Meet at association office.

8:30 p.m. Student prayer time, greenway between Shelby Center and Charger Village.

University of Montevallo: Tuesday, August 6, 6 p.m. Prayer rally.

University of North Alabama: Monday, August 5, 10:30 a.m. Prayer rally, followed by lunch and campus prayer walk, Baptist Student Center.

University of South Alabama: Thursday, August 15, 4 p.m. Campus prayer walk, Baptist Student Center.

University of West Alabama: Tuesday, August 6, 10 a.m. Prayer rally, Student Union Building.

Faith-Focused Security Training

This training is highly recommended for all churches taking mission trips and required for churches who participate in State Board of Missions projects. Topics will include travel security, code of conduct, crime survival, basic crisis policy and more, all from a faith-based perspective. Training is provided by Fort Sherman Academy, a recognized leader in faith-based training for missions organizations.

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

REGISTRATION: Limited to 50 participants.

CHOOSE FROM THREE EVENTS:

• **Faith-Focused Security Training—Level A+:** Thursday, August 29, 2013; 8 a.m.-3 p.m.; Whitesburg Baptist Center, 7300 Whitesburg

Dr., Huntsville. Led by one of FSA's master teachers.

• **Faith-Focused Security Training—Sentinel Level A:** Saturday, August 24, 2013; 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; West End Baptist Church, 2005 2nd Ave. N., Clanton. Led by Sentinel Trainers certified by FSA.

• **Faith-Focused Security Training—Sentinel Level A:** Saturday, October 26, 2013; 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Government Street Baptist Church, 3401 Government Blvd., Mobile. Led by Sentinel Trainers certified by FSA.

For more information or to register, go online to www.alsbom.org/ffst, or please contact Sheron Poole at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 298, or (334) 613-2298, spooler@alsbom.org.

Fall Senior Adult Retreat

Monday through Wednesday, October 14-16, 2013

SHOCCO SPRINGS

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

Celebration Leader: Gerald Hallmark, retired pastor, First Baptist Church, Alexander City

Preacher: James Sampley, pastor, First Baptist Church, Ashville

Musician: Alan Furr, First Baptist Church, Ashville

Come and join with other senior adults to celebrate the race "for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." You will not have to jump any hurdles or run a marathon, but you will hear some great messages from God's Word, praise God through some inspiring music and enjoy some time of sweet fellowship and fun. This event will begin with lunch on Monday and end with lunch on Wednesday.

Registration: 1-800-280-1105. Cost depends upon choice of lodging and is per person.

Online Info: www.alsbom.org/fallsenioradultretreat

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

Alabama Campers on Mission Fall Rally

Wednesday through Saturday, September 25-28, 2013

National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds, Dothan

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

The Alabama chapter of COM sponsors a Fall and Spring Rally and more than 20 mission projects a year. Visitors who are interested in possible membership are welcome to attend the rally. Mission reports and opportunities are presented Friday evening or Saturday morning. Go online to www.alabamacom.org for a rally schedule.

COM projects include: state fairs, motor speedways, sewing, nursing home ministry, puppets, prayer walks, Seaman Center, association camps, church construction and disaster relief.

Any adult may join Campers on Mission. COM is family-friendly and provides a great way to experience the relaxation of vacation with the satisfaction of a mission project. It is a great pathway to become an on-mission family.

Enrollment form: <http://www.alabamacom.org>



PASTOR, DEACON/ SPOUSE

THEME: **SERVING
WELL**



RETREAT

Shocco Springs, Friday and Saturday,
September 27-28, 2013

Begins with registration at 4 p.m. Friday,
concludes with lunch at noon Saturday.

Speakers: Ed & Kathy Litton and Joe
McKeever

Cost: \$80 per person (double-
occupancy); \$100 per person for a
private room.

Reservations: 1-800-280-1105

*For other information, please contact Ministry
Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext.
218, or (334) 613-2218, dddickey@alsbom.org*

Church LIBRARY WORKSHOP

September 16-18
Shocco Springs

Who Should Attend: Those
working in or with a church
library, those wanting to revitalize
their church library, those
wanting to start a church library.

Workshops: Promotion,
Administration, Repair and Care
of Books, Keeping Church
History, Copyright Laws,
Displays, Concourse and more.

Reservations:
1-800-280-1105

Special Guest Author:

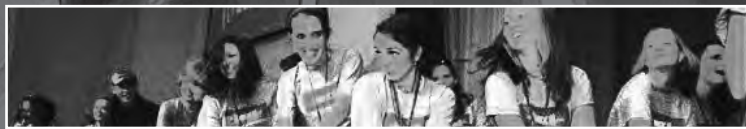
Nancy Rue, author of the Lily
series and Sophie series of novels
for teens and adults.

Online Info:

www.alsbom.org/churchlibrary

*For other information, please contact
Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at
1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334)
613-2256, jallen@alsbom.org.*

WORSHIP & LEADERSHIP MUSIC NEWS



**Alabama Singing Men and Alabama
Singing Women Retreats**

September 12 & 13, 2013, at Shocco
Springs. \$20 deposit. \$80 per person
(double-occupancy). \$100 per person
(private room). ASM directed by Tom
Smith. ASW directed by Gayle Smith.
Register with Shocco Springs at 1-800-
280-1105.

Children's Honor Choir Auditions

Deadline for audition forms and CD:
November 1. Start preparing now as your
children's choirs start back at school time.

Senior Adult Choir Celebrations

October 24 and 25, 2013, beginning at
10 a.m. October 24 at First Baptist
Church, Pleasant Grove, and Eastmont
Baptist Church, Montgomery; October
25, First Baptist Church, Fairhope, and
Central Baptist Church, Phenix City. For

updates regarding this ministry event,
go online to www.alsbom.org/seniorfest.
Call for a registration form.

State Keyboard Festivals

November 2 at Meadow Brook Baptist
Church, Birmingham, and Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church, Gordo; November 4 at
First Baptist Church, Fairhope; November
5 at First Baptist Church, Enterprise. Cost
\$5 per student (money to be turned in
by the teacher). Teachers, please bring
the money for all students to the event
or mail a check to: Office of Worship
Leadership & Church Music, State
Keyboard Festivals, P.O. Box 11870,
Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

*For more information on these events,
please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon
Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279,
(334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.*

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

OCTOBER 6-8 • SHOCCO SPRINGS

Spouses are welcome to attend! Sunday night worship kickoff begins at 7 p.m. The event will conclude by noon on Tuesday. **The conference itself is free.** Lodging for two nights and four meals will be \$75 per couple or \$50 per individual. Childcare will not be provided.

This retreat is designed for the "point person" in a local church who leads in youth ministry (middle school – high school), no matter your vocational status.

"Together Ministry" will take a look at the impact of youth ministry service on relationships in our personal lives: family, friends, etc. We will also give consideration to impacting the lives of others in relationship-driven local church ministry with youth.

Featuring Chris Sligh, American Idol top ten finalist in season six.

Sunday night speaker: Wade Morris

Other speakers include Roger Davis from Student Life and

Andy Blanks from Youth Ministry 360.

Many breakout sessions will be offered.

*For additional information visit www.onemissionstudents.org
or please contact Ministry Assistant Lydia Patterson at
1-800-264-1225, ext. 275, (334) 613-2275, lpatterson@alsbom.org.*



ALABAMA YOUTH MINISTERS RETREAT



Chris Sligh

NOVEMBER 2013

MY HOPE AMERICA
WITH BILLY GRAHAM

DON'T MISS BEING INVOLVED IN BILLY GRAHAM'S FINAL CRUSADE. FOR YOUR CHURCH TO BE TRAINED, CONTACT THE **STATE EVANGELISM OFFICE** AT 1-800-264-1225, EXT. 245, PDAVIS@ALSBOM.ORG WWW.ALSBOM.ORG/MYHOPE

ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries



Called to Communicate

Tuesday, October 8, 2013
Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

COST: \$20 per person

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Jamie Allen at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 256, or (334) 613-2256, jallen@alsbom.org. www.alsbom.org/ctc

52nd Annual Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference



SUNDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY, **March 2-5, 2014**, Shocco Springs

"Taste and See: *Savoring the Sweet Grace of God*"

Conference Leader: Margaret Kennedy

Worship Leader: Tim Gay

We invite you to join us as we celebrate and share the sweet grace of God in our lives professionally, personally and spiritually. Mark your calendar and plan to join us. Other details will be coming soon.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sandra Lewandowski at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 316, or (334) 613-2316, slewandowski@alsbom.org.





Photo courtesy of Lee Schansberg

Dauphin Island Baptist Church's resort ministry center can house up to 100 people or three groups at a time.



Photo courtesy of Lee Schansberg

A group of volunteers helps lead Vacation Bible School in the area.

Tailor-made missions work

Dauphin Island Baptist Resort Ministry Center serves community, houses missions groups

By Taylor Hamm
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

This is the busy season for Dauphin Island Baptist Church's resort ministry center. Located on the 14-mile-wide barrier island, three miles south of the mouth of Mobile Bay, the 35-year-old Dau-

phin Island Baptist Resort Ministry Center can house up to 100 people or three groups at a time. Groups may do hands-on missions work at local sites such as the Salvation Army or the Bay Area Food Bank, but the majority of groups prefer to work with area churches to reach children, running day camps or Vacation Bible School (VBS). Some

groups also work with the elderly in the area, visit orphanages and rehabilitation centers and help the church with cleaning, painting or construction projects. About 15 area churches are benefitting from this year's missions teams, said Lee Schansberg, resort ministry coordinator. She also noted that no two experiences are the same because

the missions opportunities are tailored to each group's preferences, talents and skill sets.

Helping the church

"We fit the week to what the group wants to do," Schansberg said. "It's really powerful and encouraging to the ministers to see a group come in and help with a VBS when you have children in your area you want to reach but can't do it alone, so it helps when we can come in there and do that."

Lee's husband, Chris, who serves as pastor of Dauphin Island Baptist Church, said the ministry

center also bolsters the church's presence and Christian witness in general.

The groups that come to the resort center help the church canvas neighborhoods, run camps, participate in beach outreach ministry and help do things the church would not typically be able to accomplish, he said.

"The center allows us to have a disproportionately large impact on the community, relative to our size," Chris Schansberg said. "It gives our church a cosmopolitan flair and has that resort impact, with people from all over here."

Heal A Child Who Is Praying For Someone Like You.

Free cleft surgery which takes as little as 45 minutes and costs as little as \$250, can give desperate children not just a new smile – but a new life.

“...one of the most productive charities – dollar for deed – in the world.”
— The New York Times

Donate online:
www.smiletrain.org
or call: 1-800-932-9541

Your support can provide free treatment for poor children with clefts.

\$250 Surgery. \$125 Half surgery. \$50 Medications. \$

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Address _____ City _____ State _____
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Credit Card # _____ Expires _____
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Smile Train, P.O. Box 96210, Washington, DC 20090-6210

SmileTrain
Changing The World One Smile At A Time.

Smile Train is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit recognized by the IRS, and all donations to Smile Train are tax-deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. © 2013 Smile Train.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

ALABAMA BAPTIST HISTORY TOUR

Elizabeth Wells of Samford University shares with nearly 50 members of FBC Springville during the July 16 Alabama Baptist Historical Commission tour organized by Lonette Berg. More than 250 people have taken the tour this year. For information, call 1-800-325-9863.



Family MATTERS

JULY, 2013



A New Look for the Same Children's Homes

By Erin Tunnell, ABCH Communications Manager

As you can see, Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) has a new look. This is just one piece in a complete redesign of all of our communications pieces, from the magazine, to our ads in The Alabama Baptist newspaper, to our website (www.alabamachild.org) to our logo.

This does not mean we are changing our core mission, vision or values. This does mean that we are improving our communications in order to better serve you and minister to children and families in need through our Christ-centered services.

It has been a few years since we redesigned our website, and quite a few more years since we redesigned our print materials. Each change has brought improvements, but as with many things in life, we have still more room to grow.

That's why we decided to partner with Details Communications to lead us in this process. Many of you received an email survey, seeking your input as to our communications strengths and weaknesses. Details took your answers, along with those of other supporters and ABCH employees, and developed a plan that would lead ABCH in growing and improving.

In our communications you will see cleaner layouts, with text that is easy to read and photos that compliment the deeper meaning of the stories. You will still receive the high-quality writing and news and information you need in order to effectively partner with us.

Online will look completely different. From a cleaner layout and larger pictures to navigation that is easy-to-use, the website is designed to be a place for you to find the stories and information you need, as well as to empower you to share with your friends. We want it to be a living resource for you, regularly updated with resources for personal growth, such as our Pathways Professional Counseling blog, Ask Anne, as well as resources for spreading the word with your church and friends through videos and downloadable information pieces.

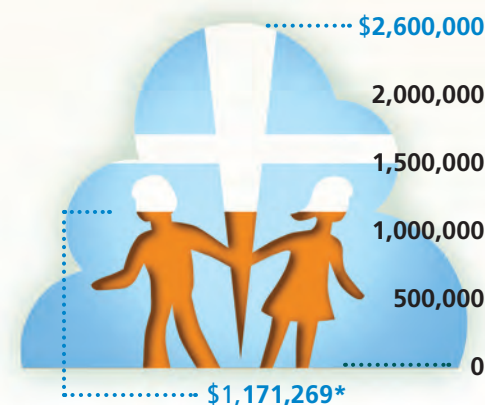
The Pathways Professional Counseling website will also change in look as part of this. The address is the same, www.PathwaysProfessional.org, but the look will better reflect its connection to ABCH. It too will have new navigation aimed at helping users find the resources they need.

As with most change, it won't happen overnight. As we continue to grow and improve, you will see more differences in the look of the inserts, information pieces and letters you receive, as well as in the website and magazine as we discover what works and what needs further tweaking to best serve you.

protect.
nurture.
restore.

2013 ANNUAL OFFERING

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



* Graphic represents giving totals at press time.



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

P.O. Box 361767
Birmingham, AL 35236-1767

Telephone: (205) 982-1112
Toll Free: (888) 720-8805



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[Facebook.com/PathwaysProfessionalCounseling](https://www.facebook.com/PathwaysProfessionalCounseling)



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[Twitter.com/PathwaysCounsel](https://twitter.com/PathwaysCounsel)

www.alabamachild.org
www.pathwaysprofessional.com

**NOW MORE
THAN EVER...**

Stay connected
to *The Alabama
Baptist*.



MAGGIE WALSH
graduate of Troy University

“ I believe that *The Alabama Baptist* is actually a service and more than just a newspaper to our state. ... We are constantly bombarded by negativity in our world, especially through our news services. ... To have a newspaper like [*The Alabama Baptist*] that is dedicated to having God-inspired messages ... talking about the tough issues and bringing issues that Christians should really be concerned about to the forefront, I think that's a huge service. ”



1-800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



CALVINISM DEBATE

There were two “Letters to the Editor” in *The Alabama Baptist* on July 4 that expressed disagreement with the Calvinism Advisory Committee report. One asked the question, “Why would we want tension in the church?” the other asked, “Must we sacrifice our core beliefs?” Those are good questions; yet I believe that tension in the church is not necessary and we need not sacrifice our core beliefs.

An explanation that brings harmony to the truths of man’s free will, God’s foreknowledge of the future and predestination comes from the truth that God is eternal and above time. God has perfect knowledge of the past, present and future. God does not limit man’s free will but He does know the future and our final destination (from “God So Loved the World” by Fisher Humphreys and Paul Robertson, page 87).

Whether we Southern Baptists can accept that explanation or not, we can all humble ourselves, admit that our knowledge is imperfect and stand together with our brothers in Christ on the truths that we do understand.

Gary Briscoe
Hoover, Ala.

CHURCH MEDIA

It is sad to say that our churches, as well as businesses, are making life less enjoyable for those of us who don’t have the Internet. I could make a long list of ways they are doing this, but my main

complaint is in church media.

I wonder if our churches realize how they are hurting their membership by not mailing newsletters anymore. Many of us look forward to the personal notes, wedding and shower announcements, etc., that used to be included in our newsletters. Now our newsletter at our church is just a neatly printed list of upcoming functions and activities of the church and must be picked up at church. Any other information has to be put on an insert of the church bulletin — which you don’t get if you are absent.

This is very disappointing to many of us who look forward to receiving a newsletter in the mail that lets us know when one of our brothers and sisters in Christ needs prayer, has been sick or is in the hospital, sends “thank-yous” or announces the arrival of a baby, an upcoming celebration, etc.

I feel like I speak for many others whose lives don’t depend on a computer. We’ve spent many years doing our share of work in the church and deserve some consideration in the decisions made.

Katie Nelson
Brewton, Ala.

‘SOJOURNERS’ IN THE US

I’m writing in reference to the June 6 article titled “Moral Issue.” In this article Russell Moore, head of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, was quoted as calling these 11 million illegals in the United States sojourners. Webster’s

dictionary gives the meaning of the word sojourner — to live somewhere temporarily, as on a visit; stay for awhile, a brief or temporary stay; visit. This definition does not describe most of this 11 million number. He is also quoted as using the word moral. Well the word moral means the right thing to do according to God’s Word.

I suppose it would be morally right for me to move into Dr. Moore’s yard, put up a lean-to, plug into his electric outlet, connect a hose to his outdoor water supply, ask for a hand out of money, drive my 2013 extended cab truck over his pretty yard, etc. Of course that’s not counting the outhouse behind his tool shed.

A person/family who belongs to Him will not move into Dr. Moore’s yard without his consent.

Mary Lou O’Barr
Steele, Ala.

CHURCH DISAGREEMENTS

Regarding disagreements with the pastor (“When I Disagree With My Pastor” by Bob Terry, July 28 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*) — good article.

The average church member will only hear about a pastor/member disagreement. They won’t know whom to believe, so they usually

believe the person they’ve known the longest.

Here is how to know to whom you should listen in a church disagreement. Answer a few questions: 1) Who is seeking restoration? 2) Who is working toward reconciliation? 3) Who is working to forgive? Who is being graceful, patient and refusing to malign others? Who is turning the other cheek?

Pray for your pastor, don’t prey on him. Go talk to the pastor if need be. Do not get involved in idle hearsay.

At the end of the day, the reputation of Christ and the congregation is more important than winning. Those who turn the other cheek are the ones who will hear one day, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

Pastors make mistakes as do church members. The question is not always what has happened but rather will the situation be handled in a manner that glorifies God from Scripture?

Ron Ethridge
Muscle Shoals, Ala.

Attorney General asks for early end to Houston County bingo case

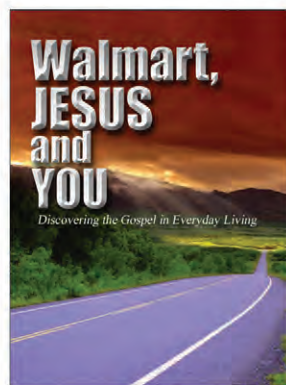
Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange has asked a Houston County judge to put an early end to an electronic bingo case in Houston County.

The case, set for trial Aug. 5, involves 691 electronic bingo machines and \$283,000 seized from Center Stage Alabama last year, according to the *Dothan Eagle*. Strange asked the county court to rule that the seizure was lawful, the *Eagle* reported. State attorneys Sonny Reagan and John Kachelman III had previously filed a motion declaring that the machines

in no way resembled the game of bingo.

“No skill. No competition. No paying attention. No daubing. No interaction. No audible announcing. No printed card. Nobody saying ‘bingo.’ Without those factors, there can be no bingo. How could there be?” the state argued in its motion, according to the *Eagle*.

The Houston Economic Development Association, which operates electronic bingo at Center Stage, has said in the past that the seizure was illegal for various reasons. (TAB)



In Walmart, Jesus, and You, Scripture is laid alongside a trip to Walmart, frustration with computers, ordering a hamburger, and other everyday experiences. Yet these experiences will reveal life-changing application that we can carry over into our homes, work places, schools, and other areas of life. Not only will you identify with these real life experiences, you will learn how to do the same with your own and hear Jesus speak to you.

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Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago July 1963

Executive Secretary Elected: The Alabama Baptist State Executive Board has elected George E. Bagley as its new executive secretary-treasurer. Bagley has served the board for 18 years, first as the secretary of the training union department, then as assistant to the executive secretary.

40 Years Ago July 1973

50th Anniversary Celebration: They traveled thousands of miles, representing all age groups and many walks of life. However they had at least one thing in common

— they all had lived at the Alabama Baptist Children's Home in Troy and were back for the 50th anniversary celebration. Lloyd Hammer came all the way from the state of Washington. A.S. Bently only traveled from Grove Hill but at 77 he took honors as the oldest in attendance. The event marked the 50th year of operation in Troy where it was moved from Evergreen on Feb. 9, 1923, with 60 children making the trip. Hobson Shirey serves as general superintendent of the home.

30 Years Ago July 1983

Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Retirements Announced:

At the June 28 meeting of the WMU executive board in Montgomery, two retirements were announced by members of the Alabama Baptist WMU department. Mary Essie Stephens, executive director for the past 29 years, announced her retirement effective June 30, 1984, and Louise Green Potts, Mission Friends director, announced hers effective Aug. 9, 1983. During Stephens's tenure, missions offerings increased greatly and WMU organizations in Alabama Baptist churches have increased from 5,618 to 7,994 and the number of members from 89,462 to 93,188. Potts is the wife of A. Earl Potts, assistant to the executive secretary

of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

20 Years Ago July 1993

Historic Point: July 1 marks a historic point in the life of Alabama Baptists' youngest institution of higher learning. Mobile College celebrates 30 years of success by taking a new name — the University of Mobile. President Michael A. Magnoli said the new university status sets the stage for more growth and success.

10 Years Ago July 2003

Birmingham Hosts World Changers: Birmingham hosted the largest ever World Changers event in the organization's 13-year history July 19–26. More than 1,600 12- to 18-year-olds worked through Birmingham Baptist Association at 135 construction and ministry sites. The volunteers ministered in the areas of light construction work, backyard Bible clubs, sports camps, prison ministry, food and clothing shelters and nursing homes. This event was preceded by smaller World Changers events in Mobile and Anniston.

California high court refuses stay in Prop 8 case

A California Supreme Court case regarding Proposition 8, which banned gay "marriage" in the state, will continue into August after the court refused to grant a stay July 15. The court is considering whether the marriage licenses being issued to same-sex couples are legal.

ProtectMarriage.com, along with the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), filed a petition with the California Supreme Court on July

12 asking the court to enforce Proposition 8, which has not been struck down by a qualified court despite publicity surrounding a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision.

"Although we would have preferred for the California Supreme Court to issue a stay so that the state's marriage amendment would be respected sooner rather than later, the proponents of Proposition 8 will continue to urge the court to uphold the rule of law," said Austin

Nimocks, senior counsel for ADF. "We remain hopeful that the court will recognize that Proposition 8 remains the law of the land in California and that county clerks must continue to enforce it."

When the U.S. Supreme Court vacated the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling against Proposition 8, no legal precedent was left declaring the amendment unconstitutional statewide, ProtectMarriage.com said. (BP)

MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church, New Hope, Ala., a congregation size of 250 is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Send resumé to: Terry Rice, c/o First Baptist Church, 535 Bearden Road, Grant, AL 35747.

PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Avondale Estates, Ga., is seeking a full-time pastor with five or more years of pastoral experience. Degree from an accredited seminary is preferred. Send resumé to: pastorsearch@afbc.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP PASTOR: Concord Baptist, Bessemer, Ala., is seeking a worship pastor to lead a blended service with a choir and praise band. Email resumé to: concordbaptist@bham.rr.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Rangeline Baptist Church of Demopolis, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of music. We enjoy a blended mix of worship music. Mail resumé to: Rangeline Baptist Church, ATTN: Music Committee, 5805 County Road 19, Linden, AL 36748.

YOUTH/MUSIC MINISTER: Sister's Baptist Church, Sandersville, Ga., is seeking a full-time youth/music minister. Requirements: 3–5 years experience in youth/music; Post graduate degree preferred. Interested candidates please send resumé to: graciouscompassion@yahoo.com.

STUDENT MINISTER: Bethel Baptist Church is seeking a student minister to lead, coordinate, plan and promote its student ministry with an emphasis

on reaching students with the gospel of Jesus Christ and training them to serve Him. Resumes should be mailed to: Bethel Baptist Church, 2245 Bethel Road, Sycamore, GA 31790, ATTN: Staff Search Committee. To learn more about Bethel Baptist Church, please visit www.bbc-sycamore.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Send resumé to: Westlawn Baptist Church, 2515 17th Street SW, Huntsville, AL 35805 or aderholts@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER: Part-time youth minister needed. Send resumé to: Central Baptist Church, 1600 Huntsville Road, Florence, AL 35630.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY: Vibrant midsize church in the growing southwest side of Birmingham is seeking a full-time children's minister. Prefer the candidate have the vision, education and experience commensurate with position. Please submit resumé and ministry objective to: Search Team, 2543 Morgan Road, Bessemer, AL 35022, or email: cteague@canaanbaptist.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

FULL-TIME DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Marion Baptist Association in Hamilton is currently seeking a director of missions. We are a missions-minded association made up of 22 churches. Please submit resumé to: ATTN: Laura, Marion Baptist Association, P.O. Box 521, Hamilton, AL 35570, or email to: mcba@centurytel.net. Deadline to receive resumé is July 31.

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Want to know God?

Pastor Rick Marshall
Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery

What if someone asked you how to find God? How would you answer? You might be asking yourself that question or perhaps don't know anyone to ask. If so, here are some thoughts that might help. They come from a profoundly insightful yet simple little verse from Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God."

I have discovered that most people who do not know God have "stillness issues." That doesn't mean those who know God aren't busy or experience stress. It's just that there is too much chaos, distractions and hurry in life. Let me illustrate with some words from a man who set out on a voyage alone across the Atlantic. He said, "I don't remember thinking deeply about who I was or my few problems in a conscious or analytical way. But a clearer, disappointing sense of myself emerged. Looking back, that voyage marked the beginning of resolve in my life."

To find God doesn't take a voyage, but it does take focus. Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." All of us have ears, but some never hear. We will never find God unless we determine to find God and devote energy to the process. Stillness means reflection. It calls for honest evaluation. It's not possible to hear every other voice out there and God at the same time. You must ask and answer the question, "Am I who and what I want to be for the rest of my life?" Finding God begins with getting a true sense of self.

Yet stillness and even reflection does not mean I know God. It is just a facilitator. Stillness allows us to hear what God is saying. The Bible says we can "know He is God." We find the voice speaking in our stillness is God and it is what we need. We discover He really wants us to know Him. He reveals His love in spite of our unworthiness. We come to know the ruler of the universe is the same One who loved us enough to send Jesus to die for our sins.

If you are having trouble knowing God, check out your "stillness issues." Whether you know God or not, being still always opens the heart to find more truth about the nature of our God.

Living on 'spiritual fumes'

People worship a fire as part of May Day celebrations in Glastonbury, England.



IMB photo

Return to paganism on rise in England; Norwich leads way

He is difficult to find and even then is barely visible, but he's there. Green Man, a symbol of ancient pagan religion, stares down from the nave of Norwich Cathedral. In a way, his presence is symbolic of how it has always been, and still is, in this medieval city.

Norwich has the unique distinction of being officially classified as England's most ungodly city. That's not unusual considering it's the only English city to ever be excommunicated by a Roman Catholic Pope.

The excommunication came in 1274. Its "ungodly" status comes from the 2011 census.

The 2011 survey has Norwich leading the way in a national shift away from Christianity, with 42.5 percent in the city saying they have no religion, against a national rate of 25.1 percent.

When residents hear they live in the most ungodly city in England, however, they aren't surprised. They are surrounded by evidence of it every day. A myriad of shops offer spiritual, New Age and pagan paraphernalia — crystals, tarot cards, etc.

And the city that once boasted an active church built for every Sunday of the year during medieval times now has a pub for every day of the year. The pubs continue to burst with their usual patrons, but many of the churches are now art galleries, meeting halls and bookshops.

Norwich pastor Marvin Lucas is now

familiar with the rich heritage of one church — St. Andrews. His initial experience with the church was very different from its Christian roots, however. The church's origins go back to 1270, but Lucas has always known it as a community center.

"It was at St. Andrews Hall where I would party," Lucas said. "In my adolescence I remember collapsing in a drunken stupor during a party in this building. It is ironic how this place of radical religious fervor is now a place of sin and debauchery."

Outspoken opponent

Growing up in England with no exposure to biblical truth or the difference Jesus can make in one's life, Lucas was an outspoken opponent to anything religious. At 25, however, he made a commitment to Christ and was baptized.

Now a minister of Norwich Christian Church, Lucas serves as pastor of two house churches in the area and runs a counseling center in the city.

Kirsty Bolton, a member of one of Lucas' house churches, sees Norwich's traditional churches as empty, cold stone buildings that sit down at the end of a lane. Most others in the city see them this way too, she believes.

"I know very few people who actually go to church at all, very few," she said. "Those who do go to church are seen as slightly odd by other people, because the majority just don't go. So the census result doesn't surprise me."

When one scratches the surface of "no religion" across the British Isles, it is not unusual to find a resurgence of paganism, some secret and some blatant. One of the best-known symbols of ancient paganism, Stonehenge, majestically sits in the English countryside. It is still the site of pagan rituals.

Not far from Stonehenge is Glastonbury, internationally known as a center of paganism, witchcraft and spirituality. Regular and heavily attended pagan ceremonies in Glastonbury of-

fer homage, sacrifices and prayers to pagan gods and goddesses, as well as to nature and its elements.

"Love pulses" and "cosmic prayers" are part of the vocabulary in Glastonbury. Flowing capes and flowers in the hair are part of the attire. Some participants are even dressed as Green Man.

Green Man first appeared in England in the 12th century but has a history elsewhere that dates back to first-century Rome. He is alive and well today, though, and his likeness continues to appear on walls and in gardens throughout the United Kingdom. He symbolizes man's connection to earth and nature.

In Norwich, Green Man not only hides in the shadows of the Church of England's cathedral but is also displayed in shop windows and jewelry shops and as pieces of art, such as paintings and sculpture.

"Norwich is kind of a microcosm of England," Lucas said. "As far as Christian history is concerned, England used to be more pagan. It's kind of come full circle, I believe — back to paganism."

The people of Norwich specifically, and of the country in general, are living on the "spiritual fumes" of Christian history, Lucas believes. When that dissipates, there will be a return to pagan society, he said.

As in Glastonbury, pagan "moots" are openly promoted and advertised in Norwich. A moot is a locally organized event where pagans of various paths come together to socialize, discuss relevant topics, celebrate, worship and practice rituals.

Lucas concludes that the youth of the country are reverting back to paganism, including participation in festivals and rituals that "awaken" elements of air, earth, water and fire.

'Regressing' to hedonism

"This movement caters to the mystic and environmental awareness of this post-modern generation," he said. "It is sad to see such a spiritual void in England that is regressing back to hedonistic practices. The future of Christianity looks bleak in Britain, but sometimes in the deepest darkness, light shines the brightest."

Mark Tall, pastor of Norwich Central Baptist Church, is not worried about the downward trend. He sees it as opportunity.

"Even though there is a decrease in the number of people who identify themselves as Christians, it is still 51 percent," Tall said. "We don't share our faith because we don't think people are open to what we believe

and we will simply experience rejection. The census tells us that there may well be more people interested than we think, even in Norwich. The good news is that the opportunity is there."

The religious trend in Norwich is only a small part of a worldwide phenomenon. A recent report on global religious identity shows that those with no religious affiliation are now the third largest "religious" group in the world. Christians and Muslims make up the two largest groups.

The study, released by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, indicates that 1.1 billion people in the world, or 16 percent of the world's population, say they have no religion or belief in God. This figure does not include those who indicated belonging to a cultic, pagan or spiritualistic religion. These adherents number in the tens of millions.

Atheist 'church'

London, located halfway between Norwich and Glastonbury, hosts a thriving atheist "church." Only a year old and with a membership of 300, its services are called Sunday Assembly, and some refer to it as a gathering for nonbelievers. Many of those who attend wouldn't even call themselves atheists. The group meets in a "deconsecrated" church building and sings along to Stevie Wonder and Queen, listens to readings from Alice in Wonderland and watches PowerPoints on subjects such as antimatter theory. One member refers to the church as a "congregation of unreligious people."

A true and sincere love for the lost is what it will take to reach this community, Lucas said.

"From my research and several years of preaching and teaching in England, I have developed a missional strategy," he said. "When we have to go to a class to love the lost, we have lost. Our outreach should be an overflow of one's own salvation and God's grace."

Tall said, "The press may use statistics to paint a dreary picture for Christians, but there are those who are coming to life-changing faith in the God who lives among us today. Clearly there is no room for complacency, but neither should we sink into despair. Rather we should work together to make Jesus known, as well as live a life of faith among those who may have none."

For more information on Norwich Christian Church, go to www.NorwichChurch.com. For more about Norwich Central Baptist Church, go to www.NorwichCentral.org. (IMB)



IMB photo

A vital element of May Day ceremonies in Glastonbury, England, is the maypole. Participants dance around it and weave an intricate design from the pole's ribbons.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 28

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson Jr. Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

WHY DO I FEEL EMPTY? Ecclesiastes 3:1, 10-14; 4:9-12; 5:1-7

Do you remember as a kid learning what a round (or a canon) was in music class? Remember the song? For me, it was "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Once we got the idea of layered repetition, we sang it over and over (and over). We had fun. Then we grew up, went to college and heard a philosophy professor ask: "What is reality? Is life just a dream?"

In this lesson, we are going to look at the elusive aspects of life, what we know and what we don't know. We can continue with a self-centered worldview, listen to the counsel of trusted friends or adjust our perspective by surrendering to the reality of a world created, sustained and preserved by God for His good pleasure. Life is more than a dream.

Time Is a Threat (3:1, 10-14)

Science teachers instructed us about cycles within creation, from the simple water cycle to the complex astronomical cycles. "The Lion King" taught us about the "circle of life." One could read the opening passage of Ecclesiastes 3 as another illustration of the monotony of cycles and the emptiness of life. Birth and death, planting and harvesting, mourning and dancing may represent never-ending cycles. Or they may point to something else altogether.

Our focal verses lead us to a different perspective. Rather than finding life empty as one season rolls into another, the reader finds that God displays beauty in His perfect timing. We can research when it is best to plant, but we cannot guarantee a bumper crop. We can plan to speak, but then discover it will be better to remain silent. The Almighty makes everything beautiful in His time.

As He works, He reveals Himself, yet we cannot comprehend how He orchestrates His glorious composition. "He cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end" (3:11).

True Friends Can Help (4:9-12)

When you walk alone, there is no one to help you up when you stumble and fall. If you hike with friends, you have someone to help you. Solomon recognized the need for reliable friends and counselors (Prov. 17:17; 18:24; 27:6, 9, 10). I often wonder if Solomon had the story of his dad and Jonathan in mind (1 Sam. 18:1-4) when writing Proverbs 18:24.

Jesus demonstrated the value of friends. He hand-picked 12 men whom He characterized as friends throughout His ministry (John 15:15; 21:5), including Judas (Matt. 26:50). Three men — Peter, James and John — formed His inner circle. John was Jesus' closest friend, to whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother (John 19:26-27).

Dear brothers and sisters, you need an honest friend. Although others often let us down, you and I need to have human friends to whom we can be accountable, honest and broken. True friends can help.

God Alone Is Worthy (5:1-7)

You must approach God humbly as you worship Him. In verse one, we find two like-sounding verbs in the original Hebrew: shamar (to watch over, guard, keep) and shama' (to listen, hear, heed). "Guard your steps" conveys being careful where you walk, being mindful of your footing. Because God is worthy of honor and praise, believers must approach Him with reverence and reflection. "To draw near to listen" is of greater benefit than foolish sacrifices, since "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22).

The song begins: "You are God in heaven/and here am I on earth/so I'll let my words be few/Jesus I am so in love with You" (Redman 2005). These words convey the instruction of Ecclesiastes 5:2 to listen to God's words and utter few words of our own in worship. "Be quick to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19) echoes our brother James. We should worship taking heed to this timely counsel from our wise friend: "Let your words be few." ❏

Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

GOD PROMISES THE MESSIAH Isaiah 53:2-12

The Messiah Became One of Us (2-3)

The words of the Hebrew prophets have resonated anew in every generation of God's people. Amos' call to "let justice roll down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream" echoed just as powerfully in the days of slavery and the civil rights movement as it did when the prophet first spoke his words to ancient Israel. It is the inexhaustible power of the prophets' words that has made them so meaningful to later generations. To read the prophets solely as an exercise in prediction and fulfillment is to rob them of much of this power. The prophets did not idly muse about the distant future or passively convey unintelligible messages about events centuries removed from their day. They spoke to their own generations, calling them to be accountable to God's word in their own day.

When Judah's King Ahaz was threatened in Isaiah 7 by enemy kings, Isaiah assured him that God would help him withstand this assault. As proof, Isaiah provided a sign to Ahaz: a woman would give birth to a son, a son whose name, Immanuel, meant literally "God with us." Had Isaiah's sign referred solely to the birth of Jesus, it would surely have provided cold comfort to the Judean king. To know that some seven centuries hence, a miraculous birth would take place in Israel would have meant little to Ahaz. It was to the birth of Ahaz's own son, Hezekiah, a son who stood as proof that his line would continue, that Isaiah's sign first referred. Later generations, though, could not avoid seeing a deeper meaning in Isaiah's sign. When Matthew wrote of the birth of God's own Son to a virgin named Mary, he could hardly help seeing a deeper and more profound echo of Isaiah's ancient words. In Jesus, an even greater "Immanuel" had come.

The descriptions of the "servant" in the second half of Isaiah fall into a similar category of prophetic message. When the prophetic first described the servant, it seems likely he had in mind some depiction of the nation

of Israel. In Isaiah 41:8, God calls to "Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen." He says to Israel again the next verse, "You are my servant." Similar language permeates this section of the prophet's work. But if Isaiah's first reference was to Israel as God's servant, a later generation of God's people would find a much more profound fulfillment in another servant of God: Jesus himself.

The Messiah Suffered for Us (4-9)

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus' followers waited expectantly for Him to take up the reins of Messianic rule and establish His kingdom on earth. Although He had regularly warned His disciples of His impending fate, Jesus' terrible death on the cross blindsided His followers, leaving them scrambling to understand how their expectations could have been so mistaken. It was the mournful lament over the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 that would serve as the lens through which the early Christians could make sense of Jesus' sufferings.

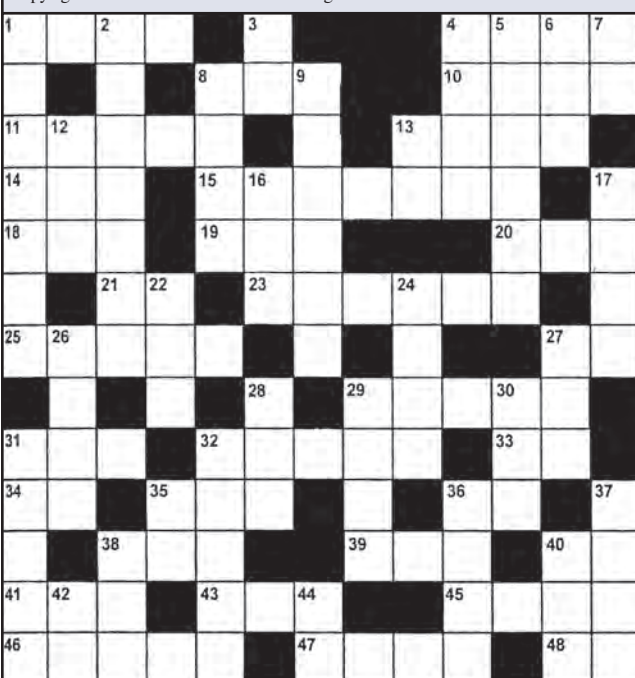
Through Isaiah 53, the early Christians came to understand Jesus had suffered for them. Peter vividly recalls Jesus' silent endurance of His humiliation, insisting, "He bore our sins" in His body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:23-25). Paul similarly affirms, "He was delivered over to death for our sins" (Rom. 4:25). Just as Isaiah's servant had suffered for someone else, Jesus was understood to have suffered on behalf of His people.

The Messiah Rescues Us (10-12)

Although Isaiah's description of the servant's suffering is tragic, it is not hopeless. Isaiah says "it was the LORD's will to crush him," but he also says "he will see his offspring and prolong his days." The servant who suffers will also "see the light of life and be satisfied." Jesus' followers found a similar message in the Messiah's sufferings. Although Jesus died on behalf of His people, His death was regarded as a beginning, not an end. Through the resurrection and the promise of life it gave to His people, Jesus also saw the light of life and lived to see His spiritual offspring as they turned to Him. ❏

Christian Crossword

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Across

- To carry something.
- Call thy land ___ ah. (Isa. 62:4)
- Shish ___ ob.
- Seen his star in the _____. (Matt. 2:2)
- Him only shalt thou _____. (Matt. 4:10)
- To go on a _____.
- Also.
- Thy word ... I will _____ it. (Ps. 119:105-106)
- Anna. (var.)
- Just a little bit.
- Samuel ran unto _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
- Printer's measure.
- That my joy might _____ in you. (John 15:11)
- Gives medicine to.
- In the country of _____. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Praises.
- A little while, and ye shall not _____ me. (John 16:16)
- To tie a rope off.
- As he _____ pure.

- (1 John 3:3)
- Not B.C.
- They _____ the ship aground. (Acts 27:41)
- To exist.
- Give _____, all ye inhabitants. (Joel 1:2)
- Parent Teacher Association. (abbr.)
- A two-year college degree.
- Medical specialty. (abbr.)
- To rest.
- Better ... he were _____ into the sea. (Mark 9:42)
- Or the _____, be not darkened. (Eccles. 12:2)
- I have fed you with _____. (1 Cor. 3:2)
- Professional engineer. (abbr.)
- Thou shalt not _____ false witness. (Ex. 20:16)
- What cannibals do.
- Teach Judah the _____ of the bow. (2 Sam. 1:18)
- Light. (abbr.)
- When I _____ silence. (Ps. 32:3)
- Or touch the _____. (Ex. 19:12)
- Length of time.
- To perform something.
- Cut off his right _____. (Luke 22:50)
- Lord of lords, and _____ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)
- Cast the _____ on the right side of the ship. (John 21:6)
- When fowls came Abram drove them _____. (Gen. 15:11)
- Ephlal begat _____. (1 Chron. 2:37)
- Office of Strategic Services. (abbr.)
- _____ men that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)

Down

- To sit or _____. (Two words)
- For there are set _____ of judgment. (Ps. 122:5)
- Mommy. (var.)

- Thy word is a _____ unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
- That we may _____ with him. (John 11:16)
- Jesus _____.
- So shall thy _____ be filled. (Prov. 3:10)
- Egyptian sun god.
- Rolled _____ the stone. (Matt. 28:2)
- Jesus also suffered without the _____. (Heb. 13:12)
- Estimated time of arrival. (abbr.)
- Snake.
- New Testament. (abbr.)
- Not A.M.





Hartford's Shiloh celebrates 125th anniversary

It was a special celebration for Shiloh Baptist Church, Hartford, June 30 as the church marked 125 years of ministry.

The anniversary day included a worship service with a message delivered by former pastor Robert McMicken, who served the Geneva Baptist Association church from 1981 to 1994. McMicken offered a word of encouragement to those who have anchored the church as well as to the younger generations coming up to be "the anchor in Christ that we need to be," said Pastor Ricky Hall.

Hall said there were two baptisms during the service, and ensembles delivered special music. Dianne Brandon sang as well as worship leader Seth Dunnington. A celebration video also was shown featuring the church's history.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate to direct descendants of Shiloh Baptist charter members, and a lunch followed the worship service.

According to Hall, since January the church has seen 37 new members and 11 of those have been professions of faith. "You can tell God is working," he said. "My prayer is for God to continue to save people. ... It's just exciting to see [Him] work."

(Julie Payne)



UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Alumni Invited to Participate in Project Serve:** The University of Mobile is gearing up for the third annual Project Serve, a day when classes are canceled and students, faculty, staff and alumni share God's love through service to the community.

Project Serve 2013 will be held Sept. 20. Alumni are invited to sign up to participate, with opportunities for service ranging from assisted living centers and elementary schools to clothes closets and health clinics for the underprivileged.

Organizations in Mobile and Baldwin counties may submit a request for a Project Serve team assist them for the day.

For more information, call the marketing and public relations office at 251-442-2210.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Pharmacy Grant Will Put Science Behind Beyond-**

Use Dates: Samford University's McWhorter School of Pharmacy has received a \$10,000 International Academy of Compounding Pharmacists Foundation grant to support research in compounded pain formulations.

Pharmacy professors Dr. John Arnold and Dr. Gregory S. Gorman will use the funds to evaluate aspects of a compounded product's assigned beyond-use date (BUD), sometimes a problematic call for a dispensing pharmacist.

When compounding pharmacists prepare specialty formulations that are not commercially available, they assign a BUD to represent how long the mixture is believed to be potent. Because a compound may contain multiple active ingredients from various drug classes, assigning an accurate BUD can be challenging.

The researchers will measure the potency of several of the most commonly compounded topical pain creams over a specified time period. In addition to generating BUD data, the experiments will determine efficacy based on how much of the active ingredients penetrates skin.

The grant is designated for a 12-month time span, which began July 1. The research will take place in faculty laboratories in Samford pharmacy school's Ingalls Hall.

► **Grant Will Help Samford Nurse Anesthetists and Their Patients:** Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing has received a grant that will ensure continued traineeship support for students in its department of nurse anesthesia. This also may mean better health care for patients in many medically underserved areas, where more than half of recent Samford nurse anesthetists work.

The Nurse Anesthetist Traineeship (NAT) Program grant from

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will provide \$22,536 to be dispersed over the next 12 months.

Traineeships help defray the cost of tuition, books and living expenses for registered nurses who are enrolled as full-time students in the graduate-level nurse anesthesia program.

"Our demanding curriculum prohibits students from being employed, so the traineeship program is invaluable in helping relieve some financial burden," said Samford nurse anesthesia department chair Dr. Terri M. Cahoon.

This marks at least the eighth consecutive year that the Samford nurse anesthesia program has received the Title VIII grant from HRSA. In that time, students have benefitted from almost \$153,350 in NAT funding.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College to Hold Rose Sunday:** Judson College will hold its annual Rose Sunday services Aug. 25 at 11 a.m. at Siloam Baptist Church, Marion. The event will launch the college's yearlong celebration of its 175th anniversary.

Special guest speakers will include Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Rose Sunday was first observed Sept. 19, 1915. Students processed from Jewett Hall to Siloam Baptist in honor of Judson's founders. The ceremony has been a part of student traditions for almost 100 years but has its origin in a practice that dates back to when Milo P. Jewett, Judson's first president, gathered students every Sunday morning to walk with him to church.

President Obama urged to do more in fight against religious discrimination

Nearly 40 members of the U.S. House, among them Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and Muslims, sent a letter to President Obama on July 17 urging him to convene a "Religious Diversity Summit" and do more to fight discrimination against religious minorities.

"The targeting of religious minorities in America is reaching a crisis point and we believe your leadership is crucial to stemming this rising tide of violence," the letter writers said.

The letter comes just ahead of the first anniversary of the Aug. 5

attack by a white supremacist on a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis., that killed six worshippers. Muslim advocacy groups say there has been an increase in attacks against mosques and Muslims since the Boston Marathon bombings April 15.

A religious diversity summit would bring together religious leaders, politicians, academics and other leaders. Among other goals, it would develop "best practices" or "guidelines" that local communities could follow when dealing with religious divisions or other religious issues. (RNS)

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Someone You Should Know



By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

BEN McLEOD

First Baptist Church, North Mobile, Saraland
Mobile Baptist Association



McLEOD

FAVORITE VERSE: Romans 8:1
FAVORITE HYMN: "It is Well"
HOBBIES: Playing golf, baking

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Jessica;
expecting their first child Nov. 4.

Ben McLeod leads the media team at First Baptist Church, North Mobile, in Saraland. On a weekly basis he films, edits, oversees the church website and carries out set designs for new sermon series. McLeod grew up in Albany, Ga., and attended Sherwood Baptist, the church that produces Christian films. He has been on the crew of films including "Facing the Giants," "Fireproof" and "Courageous." He attended film school in Orlando.

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ?

A: I grew up in a great home with godly parents who were always praying for me and encouraging me. My parents not only told me how to live for Christ but they modeled it. I saw it lived out in their lives ... at church but most importantly I saw it at home.

Q: How were you led into your work as a church media and communications director?

A: Well funny thing is I never saw myself working in a church. I loved being a part of the films in Albany, Ga., but I didn't see myself doing that for a career inside the walls of a church. Then two years ago Jason Breland, the worship pastor (at First Baptist, North Mobile), called me. I'll never forget it — I was on the set of "America's Got Talent" and I didn't recognize the number but answered anyway. A few weeks later I was in Mobile interviewing for the job.

Q: What do you get from this ministry work?

A: I really love what I do. One of the things I get to do is film people's story, and there is nothing more powerful than someone's story. I am constantly challenged and

blessed by what people are going through and overcoming.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My parents have always been supportive no matter what. My wife has been amazing in every aspect of my ministry. She is supportive and so patient with me on weeks like for our Christmas program when we are going 90 to nothing. I am truly blessed.

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

A: God has called me and my wife to North Mobile, and I just want to be in His will. If I can contribute to God's vision for this church, what a huge honor. I don't want to be remembered for making videos but for loving Christ and pointing people to Him.



Sanctus Real

Photos courtesy of Merge PR

Unwavering faith

Sanctus Real encourages audiences to hold onto God's promises

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While performing concerts around the country, the Christian rock band Sanctus Real encourages audiences with songs emphasizing the importance of clinging to God's promises in the midst of life's challenges and storms.

The Dove Award-winning and Grammy-nominated group is made up of lead singer Matt Hammitt, guitarist Chris Rohman, bass player Dan Gartley, drummer Mark Graalman and Pete Prevost on the guitar, banjo and piano.

The songs on their latest album, "Run," are designed to help believers reflect and respond to biblical truths.

"These songs were written with a purpose — sharing our hearts and experiences we've gone through recently," Rohman said. "When trials come, we are able to have hope because of our relationship with Christ. God's love for His children never fails."

"We want to remind people that whatever trial they may be dealing with, God is with you and will never leave you. I think the honesty in the lyrics really resonates with people. It's our desire that this album is just a continuation of what we have been doing for the past 16 years. We're thrilled to be able to share these songs with people."

Over the past few years, the group has faced several challenging situations and seasons.

In 2010, Hammitt's son, Bowen, was born with a serious and rare heart defect, Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS). In babies with HLHS, the left side of the heart cannot pump blood, so the right side must supply both the lungs and the body. Without surgical intervention, the condition is fatal. Next year, Bowen will have his third surgery. Since Bowen's birth, thousands of people from around the world have sent messages of encouragement while committing to pray.

Hammitt and his wife, Sarah, have gained firsthand knowledge and awareness of the practical, financial, emotional and spiritual needs that families endure while caring for a child with a congenital heart defect. Desiring to help others, they have created the Whole Hearts Foundation, designed to assist families with similar conditions and provide supportive resources.

Another trial for Sanctus Real occurred in 2012, when the tour bus they were traveling in caught on fire following a concert, destroying all of their personal belongings. Fortunately the bus was covered by insurance, and band members were blessed during this time by the support of fans who felt led to reach out with financial support and help the group get back on the road.

Through it all, band members continued to hold onto God's promises in the midst of these trials, and their unwavering faith during these circumstances provided countless opportunities to share the gospel.

"When bad things come your way, you can either be angry or bitter — or you can let them shape, mold and teach you les-

sons about life," Hammitt said. "It's our desire that people will be encouraged as they see that we have been brought closer to Christ through our trials, and He is the ultimate source of comfort and strength. By bringing others to Christ during a time of struggle, we want to lift up the body of Christ and further the work of the Kingdom, in all things giving glory to God along with praise and thanksgiving."

Today with eight No. 1 radio singles and digital track sales exceeding 1 million, the group has heard countless stories about their original songs influencing families and drawing them closer to the Lord.

One of their newest songs, "Pray," was selected as the 2013 National Day of Prayer theme. "We hope this song serves as a reminder for Christians how important it is to keep a healthy prayer life," Rohman said. "Even when you don't know what ... to pray, just cry out to Jesus. We need to bring all of our cares and burdens to Him." ❏



World of Religion

Compiled from Wire Services

Canada helping U.S. protect religious freedom globally

OTTAWA, Canada — Canada's fledgling Office of Religious Freedom is joining the United States as the only other major diplomatic-level office fighting religious freedom violations around the world.

The office opened in February in Canada's Foreign Ministry, so its new ambassador of religious freedom, Andrew Bennett, is in the early stages of traveling to countries with religious freedom violations.

Bennett also is traveling from Ottawa to the United States to brainstorm with U.S. officials and advocates on the issue.

In an interview with WORLD News Service, Bennett stated his definition of religious freedom: It is not merely the "freedom to worship," he said, noting that religious freedom encompasses all of life, including the freedom to express one's religion, the freedom to conduct missionary activities, the freedom to convert and the freedom not to believe.

Perhaps the most significant among Bennett's plans: His office will be training Canadian diplomatic staff around the world on the issue of religious freedom. The idea is to equip foreign service officers on the ground to be able to recognize and handle religious freedom violations. The U.S. State Department's religious freedom office also trains American foreign service officers.

"We push religion so far into the private sphere that we forget to engage in the public sphere on matters of religion and faith," Bennett said. "My goal is that Canadian diplomats abroad are the go-to people on religious freedom issues."

Canada may be able to speak more openly on the issue than the eggshell-walking American diplomatic corps. Bennett was diplomatic on that point, but he said Canada would play the role of the "honest broker" on religious freedom violations. Last year Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird was more pointed about the office, saying Canada is "no longer a country that simply goes along to get along."

African religious leaders rebuke Obama's 'view'

NAIROBI, Kenya — Religious leaders in Africa strongly rebuked President Obama's call to decriminalize homosexuality, suggesting it's the reason why he received a less-than-warm welcome during a recent trip to the continent.

In a news conference in Senegal during his three-nation tour, just as the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a federal ban on same-sex "marriage," Obama said African nations must grant equal protection to all people regardless of their sexual orientation.

"My basic view is that regardless of race, regardless of religion, regardless of gender, regardless of sexual orientation, when it comes to how the law treats you, how the state treats you ... people should be treated equally," Obama said. "And that's a principle that I think applies universally."

However homosexuality is illegal in 37 African countries, according to the Washington-based Council for Global Equality, and many religious leaders there view it as contrary to scriptures and custom. Indeed some clerics said Obama's statements on gays spoiled the welcome religious leaders and their followers could have accorded the first African-American president.

Sheikh Saliou Mbacke, a Senegalese Muslim leader who coordinates the Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa, said, "The subject of homosexuality must not be used as a tool to blackmail and coerce society to defy God's command, which is more important than any world power."

England, Wales move to recognize gay 'marriage'

CANTERBURY, England — England and Wales became the 16th and 17th countries in the world to recognize gay "marriage" after Queen Elizabeth II gave "royal assent" to a same-sex "marriage" bill.

Under the new law, gay men and women will be able to join together in civil ceremonies or in church services — although no religious denomination will be forced to carry out such services.

Cheers, laughter and clapping broke out in the House of Commons when Speaker John Bercow announced the bill had been approved. The bill's passage saw many angry exchanges. It had the full support of Prime Minister David Cameron, despite the consternation of many in his own Conservative Party. The leaders of two other main parties, the Liberal Democrats and New Labour, also backed it. But some political commentators predict Cameron's gay-friendly attitudes will cost him at the next election in 2015. ❏