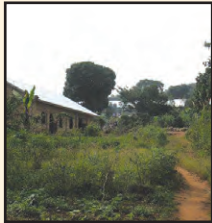




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Photo by Neisha Fuson

Flowers mark the area of the choir loft where Karen Shahan sang each week at FBC Birmingham.

# Unimaginable tragedy

## FBC Birmingham members rally around staff member in death of his wife

By Neisha Fuson and Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

Charles T. Carter was already preaching a summer sermon series on the Psalms at First Baptist Church, Birmingham, when the words of Psalm 73:16-17 became a stronghold for the congregation. They faced a tragedy never imagined possible.

Karen Shahan — wife of Richard Shahan, children and families pastor — was murdered in their home, just across the parking lot from the church. She was found late morning July 23 by church officials after not showing up for a previously scheduled appointment and work. The investigation was still in process at press time.

“We have to take this tragedy and see it against the framework of our Christian faith,” said Carter, who has been interim pastor of First, Birmingham, since October 2012.

Carter also served with the Shahan family in the late 1980s and 1990s at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. The Shahan family

has been at First, Birmingham, since 2009.

Richard Shahan is known as one of the best in Southern Baptist life when it comes to children’s ministry, Carter noted. “He is a master when it comes to children’s programs.”



SHAHAN

In fact, the astute quality and successful results of the recent Vacation Bible School at First, Birmingham, still linger in the church’s fellowship hall, figuratively and literally.

“We had 139 kids and 54 adults involved,” Carter said, noting there were 25 professions of faith.

Richard Shahan wrote the curriculum based on the choices Daniel made and designed the set and

costumes. “It was masterful.”

“And Karen was so supportive of Richard in his ministry,” Carter added. “She was shy and quiet and preferred to fade into the background, but she was extremely supportive of him.”

Karen Shahan, 52, made her profession of faith as a teenager at First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla. “She was a humble, sincere person,” Carter said.

Karen Shahan also was known for her soprano voice in the choir.

“She was a fine, fine Christian lady and a faithful member of the choir,” said Don Campbell, who served as minister of music and worship (1993-2009) and later pastoral care (2010-2012) at First, Birmingham.

(See ‘Hold,’ page 9)

# COMMENT

## Where Will You Serve?

**W**here will you serve God during the coming church year? Although most churches use a variety of committee structures to fill the many servant-leader needs of their ministries, program, activities and functions, the ultimate decision about where one will serve remains with you — the individual Christian.

A few churches are so committed to individual Christians deciding where they will serve that the churches do no enlisting at all. Instead these churches simply list all the service opportunities in the church and wait for members to respond.

If a ministry is not properly staffed, the church concludes God is not leading them to do that ministry because God's people have not felt led to serve in those places.

Most churches, however, enlist volunteer servant-leaders using a nominating committee or a committee on committees.

In the next few weeks most every church will be scurrying through its membership trying to make sure every position is filled and the church can function effectively for the coming year. So where will you serve God during the coming church year?

### Equipped for service

In practically every Baptist church a few members will probably insist they have no gifts or abilities enabling them to serve in the church.

However the Bible says otherwise. The teaching of God's Holy Word is that every born-again Christian is equipped for service through the church — the Body of Christ.

This understanding begins with recognizing that God gives His Holy Spirit to every believer. The apostle Peter made that point at Pentecost when he urged his listeners to "repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). He then added the promise, "and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Since the day a person accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God's Holy Spirit has resided in the heart of him or her.

The apostle Paul adds to our understanding of this truth in 2 Corinthians 5:5 when he writes, "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

Paul plainly says every believer not only has



THOUGHTS  
By Bob Terry

the Holy Spirit in his or her life but also that God's Holy Spirit is active in them reminding them of the down payment God made toward our final and complete salvation.

Part of that activity is related to spiritual gifts that equip each and every believer to serve in God's church.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the writer deals with spiritual gifts directly (v. 1). In verse 7 he states clearly "now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given." There is no mistaking those words.

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each believer — not to a few but to "each one."

In the preceding verses, the apostle Paul adds to our understanding. Verse 4 declares there are different kinds of gifts.

In the Greek, the word "gift" comes from the same root word as "grace." Gifts are a form of grace and all come from the same Spirit. Whatever spiritual gift one has, it is a grace-gift from God's Holy Spirit.

Verse 5 says there are different kinds of service. Again in the Greek language, the word "service" comes from the same root word as the word "deacon."

After all a deacon is a servant. The apostle declares that no matter the kind of service one does, it is done for "the same Lord."

Jesus taught the same truth in Matthew 25 when He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me" (v. 40).

"Workings" in verse 6 refers to various abilities or skills. The writer again says there are different kinds of workings "but the same God works all of them in all men."

The explanation could not be clearer. God

gives spiritual gifts to everyone and everyone's spiritual service is for God Himself. It is God who works in all men to enable them to use their gifts for His honor and glory.

God is the origin of service. God is the destination of service, and God is the enabler of service along the way. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

Why does God give every believer a spiritual gift? For the common good: that is what verse 7 makes clear. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal boasting.

They are not given for private enjoyment. Spiritual gifts are given to every believer so every believer can contribute to the common good of the Body.

First Peter 4:10 reinforces this teaching when it declares, "Each one should use whatever gift

he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

In 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul uses the analogy of the body when he writes, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts and though all its parts are many, they form one body."

He adds in verse 27, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Every Christian is gifted by the Holy Spirit in order to contribute to the Body of Christ. That is the unmistakable conclusion of the chapter.

A healthy body needs all of its parts working together. When any single part of the body fails to function properly the entire body is

impacted. It becomes less healthy than when every part is contributing.

So the question is not if a believer is gifted to serve God through His church in the coming year. The question is where will the believer serve?

### Your spiritual gift

When you use your God-given spiritual gift to serve through His church, you contribute to the health of the church.

When you fail to use your spiritual gift to serve God through His church, the entire Body of Christ is weakened.

This coming church year make sure you contribute to the health of the church by serving as God has gifted you.

***"When you use your God-given spiritual gift to serve through His church, you contribute to the health of the church. When you fail to use your spiritual gift to serve God through His church, the entire Body of Christ is weakened."***

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

(ISSN 0738-7741;  
USPS 011-080)

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Union Grove Baptist Church, Opelika, helped fund a church (pictured here) and school in Uganda through a partnership with Ugandan missionary Vincent Victours Katongle. Union Grove later found out there was a possibility Katongle was preying on the finances of unsuspecting congregations and running from police.

# Warning other churches

## Opelika's Union Grove Baptist falls victim to Ugandan missions scam

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**I**t started with an uneasy feeling. Then as more information came in, things took a heartbreaking turn, said Brian Parr, associate pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church, Opelika. "I am sending this message," he wrote in mid-July, "as an effort to prevent other churches from falling prey to the same unfortunate situation that our church has currently realized that we are in."

The letter was sent to Alabama Baptist officials just after Union Grove severed ties with Ugandan missionary Vincent Victours Katongle after two years of partnership.

The church helped fund the construction of a church and school in Uganda, ministries that missions teams from Union Grove Baptist visited. A team from Union Grove saw 1,000 people profess faith in Christ during a nine-day crusade there in 2012.

But over time, church members got the impression that everything might not be quite right.

### 'A little skeptical'

"A couple of ladies in the church got a little skeptical that some of the stories didn't match up," Parr said.

Katongle was visiting churches to raise money for the Ugandan mission, much as he had done at Union Grove, and two women from Union Grove went to hear him speak.

He was asking for money to put roofs on the

dormitories — roofs that were already in place, Parr said.

"There are several things like that, where we believe many churches may have paid for the same project," he said. "We felt there was a danger there, so we brought him in and talked with him about it."

Katongle denied it, Parr said, but there were "several problems."

Union Grove members reached out via Facebook to people they knew in Uganda to gather more information, and what they learned was surprising, Parr said.

A contact there forwarded them a Ugandan newspaper article in which a man with the same name was running from police to avoid charges of child abandonment.

Parr said he believes Katongle may be in Alabama now, and he and others at Union Grove "want other churches to be careful with this situation" to "prevent this man from preying on the finances of unsuspecting congregations."

He said Union Grove wants to see the work in Uganda continue, but they "believe we have a man here who needs to repent."

Katongle had been referred to Union Grove by two other churches who had been supporting him financially and believed everything to be above board, Parr said.

"I think what we really learned as a church

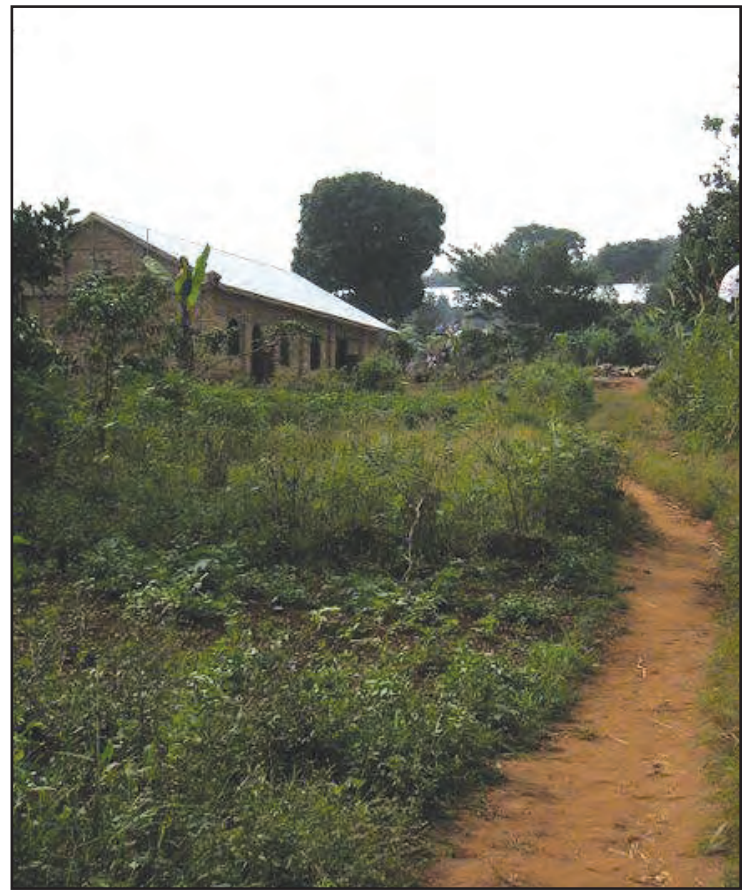


Photo courtesy of Union Grove Baptist Church

is how important it is to deal with people in foreign missions who are verified by our State Board of Missions or by the International Mission Board," Parr said. "They have a better picture of who people are and if they are who they say they are."

### Verifying authenticity

Verifying someone's authenticity before entering into a financial partnership is vital, said Reggie Quimby, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"It's a simple matter of connecting with the State Board of Missions," Quimby said. "We have contacts with the International Mission Board who have people on the ground in these places."

Those contacts can ask questions and provide information to help make a decision that will lead to good relationships and good stewardship, he said.

It's "a shame" what happened to Union Grove and other churches, Quimby said, noting that it's not uncommon for a church to be taken advantage of by someone because of strong connections that sounded credible.

For example, sometimes people seeking money will tell churches they are connected to the SBOM even when they aren't, he said.

"They may even know our names or have picked up one of our cards and say, 'This person has given me a recommendation.' That has happened before," Quimby said. "It's best to verify before you begin to be involved."

It's "really sad" when churches become entangled in scams and untrustworthy relationships, he said.

Quimby said his office is available to talk through questions a church may have about any potential or existing partnerships.

Parr also said he is available to talk with any church that might have questions about Union Grove's partnership with Katongle.

"If anyone would like to speak with us about our experiences with this project, we would be happy to speak with them," he said.

Parr can be reached at Union Grove Baptist at 334-749-0461.

To reach Quimby, call 1-800-264-1225, Ext. 239. ☛

## 5 questions to ask when starting a partnership

### 1. Have we investigated the situation?

Do we know enough about the individual and his or her financial situation? Don't just let your heartstrings pull you toward the need without doing the necessary homework.

### 2. Do we have trustworthy references and connections to establish this partnership?

The office of global missions at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is available to help verify a person's credibility on the missions field through contacts with

the International Mission Board.

### 3. Do we have a beginning time and an ending time determined?

You can always extend the partnership, but a predetermined ending time allows an opportunity to gracefully wrap up the relationship if you feel God is prompting you to move your church's resources elsewhere.

### 4. Do we have accountability set up on a regular basis?

Accountability is important for finances, personnel and goals to be met.

### 5. Are we flexible to let God move in the relationship in whatever way brings glory to Him?

Source: Reggie Quimby, director of the SBOM office of global missions



# BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTRY



Photo by Doug Stephens

The BCM missions team to Santiago, Chile, consists of (l to r, front row) Kyle Ganus, Jessca Weller, Tori Robison, Hien Tran, Chris Mills, (back row) Tanner Ethridge, Stuart Sox, Laura Powell, Erika Conn, Alan Aldridge, JC Hildreth and Evan Sox.



Photo by Donna Brittain



Photo by Donna Brittain

## Alabama Baptist college students make impact across world

By Amy Jackson  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

This summer, several Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) teams served on mission throughout the world while also receiving the opportunity to learn more about the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), missions and their Baptist heritage.

Five students from Jacksonville State University (JSU), along with campus minister Gary Brittain and wife, Donna, ministered with other student groups at the SBC's annual meeting in Houston, Texas. The team served in various ways while in Houston, but the main focus was helping with registration and providing information about various opportunities and upcoming events. The team also helped organize a block party in inner-city Houston where they were able to meet and serve many families.

Drew Sprayberry, a JSU student, participated in the SBC trip and found the event to be a great learning experience. He described it as "eye-opening" because it taught him a lot about how Southern Baptists work together.

"It was a very encouraging experience for me," he said, noting he hopes to pursue collegiate ministry as a career. "I learned a lot about different seminaries and different opportunities in the missions field right now, across the world."

Sprayberry also met many people who have similar hearts for missions and ministry, and several ministers took the time to share with him about their personal experiences of entering the ministry.

"I have a lot of hope in the fact that I know that Southern Baptists haven't given up on any of the things that are in my heart for ministry ... that we really do all strive to reach the world for Christ, and that's encouraging to me — that as a group of people, we're doing what we are called to do," he said.

Another group of students spent two weeks serving in Santiago, Chile. Ten students from Judson College, University of Mobile, University of South Alabama, Auburn University, Troy University and University of Alabama, along with Alabama Baptist state missionary Chris Mills and volunteer Tanner Ethridge, traveled to Santiago, where they served with Southern Baptist representative Greg Idell. Their main area of ministry focused on conducting spiritual surveys with college students on 15 college campuses in the city of more than 6 million people, 400,000 of them students.

Each day they journeyed in groups of two and had conversations with students, opening the door to share the gospel and connect students with small groups and local churches.

Some students were not interested in discussing their beliefs, but others were open to conversations about faith, team members said.

Jessca Weller, a student and residence adviser at Judson, said she was able to meet with one student a number of times. Though this student did not make a decision to follow

Christ, Weller trusts that, through their conversations, "seeds were planted and that the Lord will water those seeds later on through other people."

Weller, who hopes to serve as a Journeyman upon graduation, said she found the trip helpful because she was able to see long-term service options from a missionary's

perspective. Weller and the team were able to spend time with Idell and his family and see what life is like in a missions context.

"We got to work with the missionaries and with the family and see what the Lord is doing in their lives on an everyday basis," Weller said. "[It was] cool to see where I could be in the next couple of years."

Idell, who has been with the International Mission Board for more than 16 years, said his main focus in Chile is mobilizing college students serving across Latin America and coordinating the Hands-On program.

He also spends time with the university students himself and equips Chilean Baptist

*"As a group of people,  
we're doing what we  
are called to do."*

Drew Sprayberry  
JSU student

**Top photo:** Kara Coleman spends time with a family at Crossover Houston.  
**Bottom photo:** Students from Jacksonville State University serve at the 2013 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

churches to do the same, but students are best suited to reach other students, which is the emphasis of his strategy, he said.

A former BCM minister himself, Idell explained, "That's what BCM is about — a missions organization to reach people and do evangelism, but it's also a training opportunity, to train students. Students tend to be teachable and are making decisions about what they're going to do with their lives."

Weller is one who plans to continue in missions back in Alabama. One way she plans to do that is to build new relationships with freshmen girls in her dorm as they begin college in the fall. She also wants to use some of her conversational skills to open doors to sharing the gospel.

Idell also emphasized the importance of sharing with students various avenues of service. Most students will not serve in full-time missions, but there are other ways they can give such as through the Cooperative Program and to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, he said. "Most of these students aren't going to come back and live overseas, but their involvement in their churches in praying and giving, and continuing to see missions happen is vital." ❧

# MINISTRIES

*continue to make an impact across the state*

## Jacksonville State University students serve at SBC annual meeting in Houston

By Kara Coleman  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Growing up in a Southern Baptist church, I had heard of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). But up until recently, I didn't know exactly what it was or its purpose. The SBC meeting is an annual gathering of representatives from Southern Baptist churches all across the United States. They meet for worship services and to discuss and vote on current issues facing the church.

In June, I had the opportunity to travel to Houston for the SBC annual meeting with the Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) group from Jacksonville State University (JSU). After a 13-hour drive, we arrived in Houston on June 7. The following day, we participated in a Crossover Houston event: a block party hosted by a local church. There was so much ethnic diversity at that event: there were African Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics, Arabs, Asians and even a family who had recently moved to Texas from Russia. I had been told Houston was an international city, and I witnessed that firsthand at the block party.

### Meeting messengers

The SBC Pastors Conference began on Sunday night, and so did our work at the convention center. JSU's BCM, along with students from schools in Tennessee and Texas, registered messengers for the convention that week. My favorite part of the experience was meeting and talking to the messengers as they came to be registered. A messenger is a voting representative from a local church. Messengers must be approved in order to represent their church, but there is no minimum age limit to be a messenger. A few families even registered their children as messengers so they could vote and learn the goings-on at the SBC.

I didn't realize just how small the

world was until I worked at the convention. Everyone who worked at the registration desk wore a name tag with their name and the name of their state on it, and many people who came through my line saw my tag and asked, "What part of Alabama are you from?" When I said Gadsden, several people said they knew where that was. One man from Rhode Island said his brother-in-law lives about 20 miles outside of Gadsden and that he had been there before. Some people even asked me if I knew specific people in my town, and I always did.

On the ground floor of the convention center was the exhibition hall, which was filled wall to wall with vendors and representatives from Christian universities, ministries and programs. A few students in my group are planning to attend seminary after their graduation from JSU, and they were able to use our free time to talk with school representatives and view their options for seminary in one convenient location.

In that same exhibit hall were a few food vendors. One day, a teammate and I went to eat dinner. A young minister from Louisiana and his wife asked us if we would like to sit with them while we ate even though we had never met them before. We did and ended up talking with them for a long time. They shared they are considering homeschooling their children. I was able to connect with her because I was homeschooled as well and was able to share my family's experience with homeschooling. That dinner conversation made me realize the convention was not just about voting on issues and reaffirming the doctrine and teachings of the SBC; it was about fellowshiping with like-minded believers, even those you've never met before, and sharing stories of God's blessings in your life.

It's exciting to see what God is doing in hearts and lives all across this denomination. ☪



COLEMAN



Photo by Chris Mills

Jessca Weller (center) of Judson College and Hien Tran (right) of the University of Mobile share with a Chilean student.

## Mills shares about mobilizing students for Christ

By Chris Mills  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

There are so many opportunities for me to share on my campus." That's a statement I have heard over and over again from one of our students on our recent trip to Chile. This statement has challenged me in my ministry. This statement has encouraged me in knowing that God can use these students in mighty ways as they seek to be obedient to Him.

As we completed spiritual surveys with students in Chile, we found Chilean students aren't that different from Alabama students. There is a deep sense of searching, lostness and openness to the gospel of Christ.

More than 400,000 college students attend universities in Santiago. A small number of student ministry organizations are at work on campuses in the city. There is much work to be done there.

Some estimate that 75 percent of the 300,000 students who attend college in Alabama do not have a personal relationship with Christ. There is much work to be done here also. With Baptist Campus Ministries and local Alabama Baptist churches at work on college campuses across our state, my prayer is that we would see a steady increase of the number of students who come to know Christ as their Savior.

I believe the 10 students from six universities across Alabama who joined Tanner Ethridge and me on our journey to Chile will help that become a reality. These students

were united with one purpose — to make Christ known in Chile. They were passionate about their relationship with the Lord and willing to share about that relationship with any who would allow them. They are gifted in the Spanish language, teaching, preaching and encouraging their fellow believers. And they were convicted of the opportunities they have here that they have neglected.

As I work with mobilizing students for the cause of Christ, here and abroad, my desire is to see them come to know Christ more and share Him more. My prayer is that others may see "that they have been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). May others see that there is something different about these students — and that is Jesus. Will you join me in that prayer for the students who served in Chile this summer, for the other students who served through One Mission Students and for the countless other Alabama Baptist students who have served across the globe this summer? May their missions

journeys be more than just trips, but lifestyle changes. May the campuses across this state see the impact of the time that these students have had with Jesus, and may many come to know Christ through their boldness and obedience as they see their campuses and communities as their missions field.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Chris Mills is a state missionary serving as an associate in the office of collegiate and student ministries at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. ☪*



MILLS

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## BIRMINGHAM

► **East Gardendale Church, Gardendale**, will hold August Alive 2013! Thursday Night Revival Services. The Aug. 1 event will begin at 6:15 p.m. and will feature Junior Hill and the EGBC choir. Everyone is invited. For information call 205-608-0889. Allen Davis is pastor. ► **Hilldale Church, Center Point**, will hold "For Such a Time as This — An Evening with Dianne Bentley" on Aug. 22, 6:30 p.m. The evening will include a light meal and faith stories from Alabama's First Lady. Deadline for reservations is Aug. 18 and they can be made through [www.hilldalebc.com](http://www.hilldalebc.com) or the church office. Ron Pate is pastor. ► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will host The Woodalls in concert Aug. 11, 11 a.m. Everyone is invited. Dale Creel is pastor.

## CLARKE

► **Ulcanush Church, Coffeeville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 4. Lunch will follow. The church also will hold revival Aug. 5-7 at 7 nightly. Tom Brown will speak. Jesse Griffith is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **Goodman Church, Enterprise**, will hold a Monday night worship service the first three Mondays in August with special music and preaching each service. Michael Woodham, pastor of First Church, Elba, will speak Aug. 5; Mack King, interim pastor of Damascus Church, Elba, will speak Aug. 12; and Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama State Board of Missions, will speak Aug. 19. Services will begin at 7 p.m. Bruce Williams is pastor.

## MADISON

► **First Church, Hazel Green**, will hold its 2013 women's conference #You#Me#Community on Sept. 13-14. Patti Westmoreland and friend Gracie Dwiggers will be featured Sept. 13. Doors will open at 6:15 p.m. for check-in and the conference will begin at 7 p.m. The Beth Moore Simulcast will be Sept. 14. Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. and the conference will begin at 8:30 a.m. Early registration will be available until Sept. 1. No child care will be provided. To register, visit [www.hazelgreenfbc.org/media](http://www.hazelgreenfbc.org/media). Dan Moran is interim pastor.

## SHELBY

► **Oak Grove Church, Birmingham**, will host Mike Linton on Aug. 18, 10:30 a.m., as he gives his testimony about his 11-month missionary trip with Adventures in Missions. Linton's trip consisted of spreading the word of Jesus Christ in Nepal, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Uganda,

Kenya, Latvia and Lithuania/Estonia. Everyone is welcome. Jim Profetto is pastor. ► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will hold revival Aug. 11-14. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Monday-Wednesday at 6 p.m. Terry Davis will lead music/worship. Evangelist Tommy Fountain will speak Sunday morning and Stan Lewis, executive pastor of Olive Church, Pensacola, Fla., will speak Sunday evening. Mike Shaw, pastor of First Church, Pelham, will speak Monday; Kevin Hamm, pastor of First Church, Gardendale, will speak Tuesday; and Daniel Wilson, pastor of West End Church, Clanton, will speak Wednesday. Ken Phillips is pastor.

## FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**, has called **Patrick Martin** as the new pastor effective Aug. 4. He is a graduate of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and previously served at Fruit Cove Church, Saint Johns, Fla. He is married to Allison. The church also will celebrate homecoming Aug. 11, 10:30 a.m. The church's new pastor, Martin, will speak. A covered dish lunch will follow. The church also will hold a reception Aug. 25 for minister of music and senior adults **Randy "Bert" Fowler** in honor of his 20th anniversary with the church. The reception will follow the "Sounds of Praise" worship service that evening.



MARTIN

► **Antioch Church, Double Springs**, will celebrate its 102nd anniversary Aug. 25, beginning at 9 a.m. and featuring the Bama Blue-Grace singers and guest speakers. Lunch will follow. Warren Wilson is pastor.



FOWLER

## LIMESTONE

► **Mays Memorial Church, Toney**, will host Family Fun Day on Aug. 11, 4:30-7:30 p.m. with a moon bounce, obstacle course, cookout and more. AWANA registration also will begin at the fun day. Anthony Perry is pastor.

## PICKENS

► **Carrollton Church** will host a women's conference Aug. 24, 9 a.m.-noon. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. Deanna McClary will speak and Cindy Winston will lead worship. Lunch will be served. Pre-registration deadline is Aug. 16. A

nursery will be provided for children 3 years old and younger. The church also will hold a men's wild game supper Aug. 24, 6 p.m. Clebe McClary will speak. McClary also will speak at the church Aug. 25, 10:45 a.m. For information call 205-367-8577. Tommy Winders is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY

► **Lawrence Phipps** is leaving his role as senior pastor of **Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery**, effective Aug. 18 to transition into a new ministry he is launching to help churches disciple people to evangelize. Phipps came as founding pastor of Vaughn Forest 20 years ago in September.



PHIPPS

## TALLAPOOSA

► **Curt Mize** is the new youth minister of **First Church, Dadeville**. He is a native of Huntsville and a recent graduate of Auburn University. He is married to Jennifer. Gary Wiggins is pastor.



MIZE

## WINSTON

► **Antioch Church, Double Springs**, will celebrate its 102nd anniversary Aug. 25, beginning at 9 a.m. and featuring the Bama Blue-Grace singers and guest speakers. Lunch will follow. Warren Wilson is pastor.

## Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

### Gunman fires shots during worship service in Missouri

NORWOOD, Mo. — A 48-year-old man is in custody after witnesses say he opened fire during a July 21 worship service at First Baptist Church, Norwood, Mo. Worshipers tackled him before anyone was shot. One man injured his shoulder in the scuffle, but no other injuries were reported.

Pastor Stephen Fugitt was about halfway through his morning sermon when Earnest Smith entered the church carrying a "high-caliber" revolver and fired two or three shots. The suspect shot at least once into the floor between himself and Fugitt while walking toward the platform, Fugitt said. "He pulled his gun up and before he could fire, one of the guys grabbed his arm (just before he pulled the trigger) and it (the bullet) went up into the ceiling."

Several more men piled onto the suspect and wrestled the gun away from him until the Wright County Sheriff's Department could arrive. An arrest document said Smith told police he was angry at the pastor and church members because they lied about him following a previous incident at the church June 9. No one at the church wanted to file a complaint at the time, but the Wright County Sheriff's Office held Smith for a 96-hour psychological evaluation in Springfield.

Smith now faces felony charges of assault, unlawful use of a weapon, making a terrorist threat and armed criminal action. The most serious offenses are punishable by up to 15 years in prison. He remains in custody on \$250,000 bond.

Fugitt told local media he believes quick action by church members saved lives. "Everyone is traumatized, but we are thankful," he said. "We believe we had a divine help that prevented anything worse from happening."

### Cuba Baptist seminary rises from near-extinction

HAVANA, Cuba — More than 70 students in Havana received diplomas July 5-6 through a partnership that has revived a Cuban seminary during the past eight years.

Western Cuba Baptist Theological Seminary in Havana, which was on the brink of extinction, has flourished under its partnership with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, as pastors and church planters receive theological training for spreading the gospel throughout the Caribbean island country.

Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson and missions professor Daniel Sanchez presided over the Havana seminary's two graduation ceremonies.

"The interesting thing is that this is more graduates than they had students when we first started helping them, and this does not count all the [graduates] from the extension centers," Sanchez said. "They were rejoicing over not only the quantity but the quality of students that they have who are graduating, all of them active in churches throughout the convention."

## VOICE YOUR OPINION

**SPEAK UP** on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

### Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible



Photo courtesy of Princeton BMC

## Princeton opens new chapel

John E. King Jr., associate executive director for church and community relations for Birmingham Baptist Association, speaks to guests at the July 22 dedication ceremony for the new chapel at Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham. The chapel is showcased in the center of the new East Expansion lobby. The brick and glass two-story structure features a cross on the outside, heralding the hospital's faith-based mission. (Princeton)



IMB photo

In South Sudan's capital of Juba, a member of Nuru Baptist Church, the city's only Baptist church, openly reads the Bible without fear.



IMB photo

Members of Nuru Baptist Church in Juba, South Sudan, sing in celebration over the new nation's independence, giving Christians freedom to openly worship. To the north in predominantly Muslim Sudan, pressures have escalated against foreign aid workers and Sudanese Christians.

# 'Word of God cannot be chained'

## Beyond churches, Sudan regime targeting, persecuting foreign aid workers

**S**ecurity forces in Sudan reportedly are focusing on the removal of foreigners who work for hundreds of foreign aid organizations within its borders.

The concern, raised by two workers in statements to Baptist Press, follows a report on religious freedom in predominantly Muslim Sudan released July 9 by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

July 9 was the second anniversary of South Sudan's independence from Sudan. USCIRF chair Katrina Lantos Swett expressed fear for South Sudanese living in Sudan, saying they are "stateless" and face severe religious freedom violations.

The security crackdown against aid workers, meanwhile, is "aimed at foreign Christians ... under the pretense of trying to stop proselytization by Christians," reported Franklin Lloyd, a foreign worker who lived in Sudan for more than a decade, "but many of the people thrown out have nothing to do with that."

"Nothing is formal or legal, there is no formal written announcement that something is going on, there is no open accusation, there are no court cases," Lloyd said. "Everything is either being done by intimidation or by media campaigns that raise pressure to form public opinion."

### Raiding homes

Lloyd reported that security officials break into the homes of foreigners suspected to be Christians and confiscate their electronics, passports and any form of Christian literature. After the home is raided, the officers take the foreigner into custody for hours, days or, for some, weeks, Lloyd said.

"On paper Christians are still legally respected and there is still freedom of religion, but in actuality it's not being honored by the system," Lloyd said, noting that the raids are "obviously illegal, and everyone says it is illegal but they are doing it."

Victoria Channing, a Christian worker who called Sudan her home for many years, made the difficult decision to leave in light of recent developments.

"Leaving Sudan has been one of the most painful pro-

cesses I have ever experienced. I cried for days before and after leaving," Channing said.

Living under the fear of deportation or arrest, "You wake up every morning thinking today is the day security officers are waiting for you downstairs or at your workplace," Channing reported.

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011, becoming Africa's 54th nation.

The world watched as Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, began to form a new government without the southern portion of the country. Al-Bashir had seized power in a military coup in 1989 and became Sudan's president in 1993. He has since faced numerous charges from the International Criminal Court, including genocide.

Prior to South Sudan's independence, al-Bashir declared on national television, "If South Sudan secedes, we'll change the constitution. There will be no question of cultural or ethnic diversity [in Sudan]."

Arabic would be the only official language, al-Bashir said, and sharia (Islam's religious law and moral code) "will be the only source of the constitution." Sharia covers a variety of topics including crime, politics and economics and also addresses personal matters such as hygiene, diet, prayer and fasting, drawing from the Quran and examples set by Islam's prophet Muhammad.

The climate of Sudan changed quickly prior to South Sudan's secession. In early 2011, church properties in Sudan were raided, destroyed and set afire. Continuing into 2012, priests and Coptic Christian leaders were arrested under charges of baptizing converts, according to Morning Star News.

An article in Religious Liberty Monitoring reported that in Khartoum a campaign was launched to close schools and colleges operated by Christians. The Sudanese media is campaigning to punish "Christianization," and the punishment will be imprisonment for six months,

a fine or a flogging of 40 lashes, the article said.

While many foreigners left Sudan out of fear, the church in Sudan has faced mounting persecution, Lloyd said. Many fear the church will see more in the coming days. Security forces watch national Christians closely, and if Muslims convert to Christianity, they are pressured to recant their faith, he said.

Lloyd asks for believers to pray for the Sudanese church because "they are being forced underground and are facing very serious persecution. How they respond to this is going to decide the future of the Sudanese church."

Channing observed, "The government is snuffing out what they think is the light and they are trying to chain the work, to control it and to contain the believers."

But government leaders haven't read Paul's second letter to Timothy, she said, "where it says the Word of God cannot be chained, it cannot be held back."

Lloyd's wife, Patricia, said the Sudanese should not put their hope in political change. "The better and more realistic hope would be to put their hope and trust in Jesus to change their fellow countrymen from the inside out for eternity."

How to respond:

► Channing asks for prayer for those who are responsible for persecution in Sudan and for government leaders in Sudan as they undertake the drafting of a new constitution.

► Pray for believers within Sudan, that they will hold strong during seasons of persecution, continuing to meet together and share the gospel with others.

Swett, in releasing the commission's July 9 report, called 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."

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Some names have been changed for security reasons. (BP)*

**"On paper Christians are still legally respected and there is still freedom of religion, but in actuality, it's not being honored by the system."**

**Franklin Lloyd  
foreign worker**

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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

## Peeling back the polished surface

**M**other's Day and Father's Day weren't nearly as hard as we had anticipated. They were a little sad last year, but I think Aug. 1 was still harder. That was the due date. As Aug. 1 approached this year, my mind wondered what it would be like to have a 1-year-old right now.

I laughed and cried almost simultaneously — laughed at the image of myself attempting to juggle life as a working mother; cried realizing the loss of a precious life that was miscarried before we knew whether it was a boy or girl.

It all seems surreal to me now. In some ways it is as if I merely dreamed all of it.

Watching the positive symbol appear for the first time — as well as three more times just to be sure — took my husband, Jason, and me by surprise, but once we snapped out of our initial stupor a permanent smile clung to our faces. At least for a little while.

We were about six weeks pregnant when we found out. We got to be pregnant another six weeks before things started going wrong. A week later, we grieved our loss.

That was a year and a half ago. I've managed to compartmentalize most of the memories, but the dates on the calendar always scream at me.

And I'm not alone. It is estimated that at least 1 in 5 women have or will have at least one miscarriage. It may be rarely mentioned, but they notice when the anniversary dates come around.

And it goes beyond miscarriages. All losses seem to be magnified on special calendar dates. Children, spouses,

parents, siblings, friends, grandparents,

anyone who was special in our life — their birthdays, the day of the accident, when the test results came back, the day they died, the funeral. Those days peel back the layers and expose the rawness of our emotions, and we can expect to be more sensitive on those days.

Knowing that going in can help us show grace — grace to ourselves when it is our turn to be there and grace to others when it is their turn.

The only problem is we don't always know when others are walking through painful seasons. How many broken hearts float by us each day silently struggling to get through the next moment? And how many times are we insensitive by our actions, words or both?

Certainly if we don't know, then we don't know, but it's a good practice to treat everyone with love, kindness and respect at all times because we never know who is going through what. And so many times a person's actions or reactions may truly be because of the pain he or she has tucked down deep and not because of what is happening on the surface.

If we have an existing relationship with the person who is acting out of character or if we are the one acting out of character, then the easy solution is to talk about what is going on and work through it.

It's a bit harder when the situation involves people whose paths cross randomly — check-out lane at the grocery store, customer service representative on the phone, reader upset by article you've written (yeah, it's true — I've actually made a reader or two mad once or twice).

I don't always remember to assume something deeper might be happening with a person who is reacting harshly. But when these experiences come, we always have a choice of how to respond.

Tears welled up in one sales clerk's eyes when I asked if he was OK after he verbally berated me for asking a simple question. I expressed concern. He talked. I listened. He thanked me for calling him out on his attitude and doing it kindly. 🙏



# Rashional EXTRAS ...

*What topics are on your mind?*

*Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org*

## How can I be comforted if my prodigal hasn't come home?

By Rita Moritz

Excerpts from her blog at [www.preciousprodigal.com](http://www.preciousprodigal.com)

Anyone who has ever loved a prodigal knows what it's like to be devastated by the behavior of the prodigal. I'm not sure there's a loss so complete or overwhelming as watching the hopes and dreams we have for our loved ones burn up before our eyes.

I've seen parents and spouses in so much emotional pain, I could almost reach out and touch it — it was that tangible. And I've experienced that kind of loss myself — the kind that is so huge, it almost takes on a life of its own. I don't know that it would compare with losing a child, but the agonizing losses we have known make me think we can probably imagine how Jacob must have felt. No wonder Genesis 37:34 says he "mourned for his son many days."

But there's something else we can learn from Jacob's grief. His other sons and his daughters suited up and showed up. They reached out to him, but he "refused to be comforted." ... He loved Joseph, and his heart was broken at this terrible loss. But Jacob still had a houseful of children who loved him, who needed him, who wanted to be with him and comfort him. And Jacob either couldn't or wouldn't see it. His conclusion was that he could find no joy or comfort unless he had Joseph. He was wrong.

Sometimes the prodigal uses up so much of our energy that we don't spend time with or enjoy our other kids or family members. How reasonable is that? Oh, I know the one who is acting out may need to be our focus part of the time. But all the time? If he is, it's certainly not fair to the other kids, who are trying their best to do the right thing. It's not fair to the spouse who has stood faithfully by our side. And it's not fair to us.

I'm not saying your pain isn't real. I know very well that it is. But it's only a part of your life, not the whole. God's plan for your life is that you will find joy; it is your "portion under the sun" (Eccles. 9:9). However, you're not going to find that joy, I'm not going to find that joy if we're banging our sippy cups on our high chairs and refusing to be comforted unless the prodigal comes home. There's much more to your life than just that. But you won't see it, you won't enjoy it, you won't embrace it if you refuse to be comforted.

Challenge For Today: Can you, just for today, find comfort and joy in the people who love you and in the other parts of your life regardless of what your prodigal does?

**Rick Warren  
@RickWarren**

Disappointments are always opportunities to know and trust God in a deeper way.

A life lived on purpose is never boring.

**Pastor Bill Wilks  
NorthPark Baptist  
Church, Trussville**

## Choosing Light

With each morning sunrise I am choosing  
The sweeter side of life.  
Being careful what I say  
Thinking of others as I pray.  
I am choosing to slow down  
Treasuring the gift of time  
Pausing to laugh and play.  
I am choosing to see  
The goodness in others  
To forgive and cheer.  
I am choosing to listen  
To the Holy Spirit  
Who shapes my heart.  
I am choosing LOVE.

**Linda Kornegay  
Lake View, Ala.**

*SHOUT-OUT  
Congrats to the  
WINGS ministry  
at Canaan Baptist  
Church, Bessemer,  
for the recent  
Tablescares event.*

## Cultivating compassion

Compassion is a choice just as being unkind is a choice. Here are some ways to cultivate greater compassion and, through it, make your world a kinder, gentler place.

▶ Live out the Golden Rule. This compassion principle is taught by Jesus: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12).

▶ Overcome hindrances. Sometimes compassion is blocked because we are angry or because we don't understand or because we don't see the larger picture. Try to recognize a hindrance and understand it as an emotional weakness, which creates negativity in you. Then overcome it. This is what the Bible refers to as being "transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

▶ Respond readily. When you see a need, when you see an opportunity to help, respond readily. Compassion delayed is compassion denied.

▶ Hold back judging. Try to view people and situations without coming to a conclusion or reaching a judgment. Apply the teaching of Jesus to "judge not" (Matt. 7:1).

▶ Go beyond the minimal. This concept of compassion is sometimes referred to as "going the second mile," a teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 5:42.

▶ Expand compassion to all creatures. Be certain that your compassion is not limited only to other people but expands and embraces all creatures.

**Victor M. Parachin  
Pastor and author  
Tulsa, Okla.**

## Fifth of Six in a Series



## Health care in America

### New focus on wellness plans

Employers offering programs and incentives to employees to stay healthy is not a new concept, but the Affordable Care Act promotes implementing such a strategy. And many acknowledge savings in their insurance premiums when they do.

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries started a wellness program more than five years ago that encourages employees to plan a personal wellness program.

As activities are completed, the employee can be reimbursed for certain expenses, such as gym memberships, running shoes and race entry fees, up to an individual limit. In order to be reimbursed, documentation must be provided that the employee is following his or her plan.

The program has also provided employees with opportunities to learn more about healthy diet and exercise choices from experts in those areas.

Birmingham's Baptist Health System has been focused on wellness for its 4,300 employees for four years.

"We are strong believers in prevention and wellness," said Shane Spees, BHS president and chief executive officer. "We've been on a journey of preventative care and wellness as an employer where we've redesigned our health benefits for employees and dependents. We want them to take advantage of wellness services that are offered."

BHS' Working on Wellness (WOW) program starts with basic health screenings to help employees assess their overall health. Employees with one or more chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, are eligible to work with a health coach free of charge. More than half of the 600 eligible candidates are using the health coach service.

"We are arming our employees with resources to better care for themselves," Spees said. "In turn, we are spending less on health care."

For wellness program ideas, visit [www.guidestoneinsurance.org/wellness](http://www.guidestoneinsurance.org/wellness). (TAB)

# Hold on to God's presence

## Message of encouragement, hope important for hurting congregation

(continued from page 1)

"[Karen] was always positive, always supportive and encouraging," said Campbell, who now serves as minister of worship at The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla.

Campbell said Karen Shahan "worked a lot behind the scenes. ... She was always so positive and so gracious in opening her home to staff and others."

Her death has been a shock to the First, Birmingham, congregation, Carter said, but the congregation has pulled together to help.

Two church staff members immediately drove to Kentucky to pick up Richard and drive him back home when Karen was found, Carter noted. Richard had been in Franklin, Tenn., and Fort Campbell, Ky., visiting his and Karen's sons, Kyle and Colin. Kyle lives in Franklin, and Colin is in the Army serving at Fort Campbell. Colin and his wife, Elizabeth, have two children.

A church ministry assistant helped Colin navigate the red tape involved in getting a military pass to be off post for an extended period of time.

Church officials also cleaned up the Shahan house once it was released by police and helped with several funeral-related duties, Carter added, noting the church is paying for all funeral expenses as another way to help the family during this time.

Mark Wakefield, associate in the office of global missions and serving as the state chaplaincy strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said helping the grieving family in practical ways such as what Carter described is how a church can best handle a tragedy such as this.

### Taking care of needs

Church members "have shown up and cut grass or washed dishes or made beds without expecting the family to spend time with them," he said. "Most of the time people say, 'Let me know if you need anything.' But people in crisis are not emotionally able to make decisions in that way. Look for ways you can see that needs be taken care of ... without having to ask."

Wakefield also suggested that churches prepare themselves for potential tragedies ahead of time by doing a small group study on how to minister to people in crisis. Learning how to minister to others helps people understand what is "normal for people to experience and feel" during a tragedy, he explained, noting that if a church can be trained in crisis management before a tragedy happens, then the members can minister to each other in the midst of their own grief.

It also is important to stay in touch with the family after the first week of a tragedy because that is when emotional support decreases significantly, Wakefield said.

"Plan to stay in touch with the family a week later, two weeks later, a month later."

When it comes to a sudden death or even suicide, family members often ask, "I wonder if they had to suffer. I wonder how long they had to suffer."



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Charles Carter shows photos from Vacation Bible School that Richard Shahan directed in July at FBC Birmingham.

People are often let down by the idea that they "couldn't protect (their family member) or couldn't keep them from the hurt," Wakefield said. Church members and leaders need to remind themselves and the hurting family that "no person in Christ dies by himself or herself. No matter what the situation the Lord is faithful to take care of that person even when you couldn't be there."

Some other practical tips Wakefield suggested for a church in the midst of a tragedy are:

- ▶ Designate one person to be the spokesperson to media from the church. If the church is not comfortable with anyone in the church holding that position, ask for help. Having a designated person helps limit the misinformation that can be shared in the midst of a crisis situation.

- ▶ Make sure the designated spokesperson has a prepared statement providing facts and a stated plan. This is designed to "satisfy the media's curiosity" and "provide assurance that [the church] is doing the things that need to be done to take care of the family and the church."

- ▶ Ask for help. Don't be afraid to reach out to local resources, such as a local hospice group, which often have well-trained bereavement specialists. The Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries and its counseling arm, Pathways Professional Counseling, are great resources as well, Wakefield said.

For pastors who have recently faced a tragedy in the church family, Wakefield suggested that the "obvious hurt" be addressed as soon as possible from the pulpit. "The hurt affects the whole church. ... [Pastors] need to meet that head on with a message of encouragement and hope."

During the Wednesday morning and

evening prayer services the day after Karen Shahan was found, Carter read the words of Psalm 73 — "... When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God. ..."

"We have to avoid thinking that God did this or that this was the will of God," Carter told *The Alabama Baptist*. "We may not find answers to this tragedy in the Scripture, but we find something better — His presence. That's what we have to hold on to, and that's what Richard will have to hold on to."

The following Sunday Carter preached from Psalm 46:1 and Romans 8:28.

"With an unshakeable faith in God and confidence in His Word, let us seek to ascertain some eternal truths from this tragedy," Carter said as he outlined six truths:

1. The depravity of human nature (Rom. 3:10, 23).
2. The availability of help (Ps. 46:1).
3. The brevity of life (James 4:14b).
4. The priority of real values (Matt. 6:33, Mark 8:36).
5. The sovereignty of God (Rom. 8:28).
6. The certainty of hope (Ps. 42:5b, Titus 2:13).

### Gleaning biblical truths

"With all our pain and trauma, may God help us to glean some biblical truths that will bring glory to Him and be a proper tribute to Karen Shahan."

Carter presided over Karen Shahan's funeral July 27. Former First, Birmingham, pastor Stan Lewis assisted.

For more information on how your church can be prepared for or how to handle a tragedy, contact Wakefield at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 267, or the office of Leader-Care at ext. 203. To contact Pathways Professional Counseling, call 205-945-0037. ☞

# UK announces anti-Internet porn campaign

British Prime Minister David Cameron has announced a multifaceted campaign against Internet pornography that blocks in-home access to images through search engines but allows individual residences to maintain access upon request.

By the end of 2013 in Great Britain, pornographic images and prose will automatically be filtered by Internet providers for new customers, unless they opt in to receive them, and existing customers will have the option of activating "family-friendly" filters to their accounts, Cameron announced July 22 at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children London headquarters.

"I'm not making this speech because I want to moralize or scaremonger but because I feel profoundly as a politician, and as a father, that the time for action has come," Cameron said. "This is, quite simply, about how we protect our children and their innocence."

Parliament also will enact laws making illegal the possession of what Cameron described as "extreme porn," including the simulated depiction of rape.

Tackling the problem will require work also from "parents, Internet providers and platforms, educators and charities," Cameron said.

Great Britain's new national curriculum includes "unprecedented requirements" to teach online safety to children, and a new national campaign will launch in 2014 to teach parents how to keep children safe online and discuss

such dangers as sexting and online bullying, Cameron said.

"We will give CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) and the police all the powers they need to keep pace with the changing nature of the Internet," Cameron said. "And today I can announce that from next year, we will also link up existing fragmented databases across all the police forces to produce a single secure database of illegal images of children which will help police in different parts of the country work together more effectively to close the net on pedophiles."

**"My argument is that the Internet is not a sideline to 'real life' or an escape from 'real life;' it is real life."**

**David Cameron  
British Prime Minister**

"It will also enable the industry to use the digital hashtags from the database to proactively scan for, block and take down these images wherever they occur, and that's exactly what the industry has agreed to do," Cameron said.

Groups actively fighting to protect children voiced approval of Cameron's plans but cautioned that all steps must be fully implemented for effectiveness.

Peter Kerridge, chief executive of Premier Christian Media and Safermedia, told the interdenominational Christian Today media that the government needs to take decisive action against a "blatant and relentless assault on young and impressionable minds."

"Our many allies and supporters can justifiably congratulate themselves on a campaign well fought but, until these proposals are implemented, we shall maintain our vigil to

combat the open door to pornography and depravity and its impact on the innocence of our children," Kerridge said.

Cameron, acknowledging with appreciation the Internet's role in public education and communication, said an unregulated service has birthed detrimental challenges.

"The first challenge is criminal: and that is the proliferation and accessibility of child abuse images on the Internet," he said.

"The second challenge is cultural: the fact that many children are viewing online pornography and other damaging material at a very young age and that the nature of that pornography is so extreme, it is distorting their view of sex and relationships."

"Children can't go into the shops or the cinema and buy things meant for adults or have adult experiences; we rightly regulate to protect them," Cameron said.

"But when it comes to the Internet in the balance between freedom and responsibility, we have neglected our responsibility to our children. My argument is that the Internet is not a sideline to 'real life' or an escape from 'real life;' it is real life."

## 'The kind of society we want'

Cameron's personal quest to clean up the Internet intensified after he met the parents of two children who were killed by pedophiles who had accessed child abuse images online, according to *The Daily Beast*.

"Everything I've spoken about today comes back to one thing: the kind of society we want to be. I want Britain to be the best place to raise a family, a place where your children are safe, where there's a sense of right and wrong, and boundaries between them, where children are allowed to be children," Cameron said. (BP)

## Want to know God?

**Pastor Walter Blackman**  
East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle

The very first person I led to the Lord was a neighborhood rival — Randy. There were times when I was not so Christlike around him, but somehow he accepted my invitation to go to a revival service at my church. During the invitational hymn, I noticed Randy grabbing the pew with a strong grip, and I nudged the boy next to me named Keith. We asked him if he needed to go forward. Randy said "yes," and we led him to a place near the organ. Kneeling down, we explained to him the Roman road of salvation that we learned just weeks ago during a lay evangelism conference at our church.

We read to him Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned," and Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." We also read to him Romans 5:8, "But God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We went to Romans 10:9, "That if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and will believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

We asked Randy if he believed what we read to him from the Bible, and he said, "Yes." We asked him if he wanted to repent of his sin and confess Jesus as his own personal Lord and Savior, and again he said, "Yes." Keith and I led Randy to pray and ask Jesus to come into his life, helping him to turn from his sins and live for Jesus.

I have never forgotten the joy of taking Randy to the pastor and letting him tell what Jesus did for him, or watching him be baptized, or reading his Bible and telling others of how he was saved. Randy was the first of many, but I still marvel at how God used His Word, His Spirit and two young teenage boys to lead another boy, a former rival, to Jesus.

We should never complicate the gospel for others but keep it simple enough for children to grasp, receive and share. Paul put it as simple as anyone to the Corinthians, "Christ died for our sins ... was buried ... and rose again" (1 Cor. 15:3b-4). If you want to know God, do as Randy did and take the Roman road to Jesus.

## 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

**FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR:** New Hope Baptist Church, Clarkdale area. Send resumés to: 6573 Highway 145, Meridian, MS 39301, NLT Aug. 31, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee.

**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 resumés to: pastorsearch@afbc.com.

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A second reason is the dread some feel in contemplating their own death or the death of their spouse. Their will is something they plan to do later. It's always later, and often never gets done.

Another reason for postponing action may relate to the difficulty of dividing up your estate if family conflicts exist, or when unsure how wisely the inherited assets will be used.

Still others lack the will to have a will because they consider their net worth does not merit such a difficult personal task. They think they have too few assets to bother with a will or may assume that everything will go automatically and equally to all members of the family. They do not understand the benefits of a will, not only in settling their estates according to their wishes, but in making their departure easier for their loved ones left behind.

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# 'Willing to go'

## Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief team responds to Colorado wildfire victims

By Gary Hardin  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

After a series of fires scorched through forests and homes in Colorado for several weeks, a 10-member team of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers deployed to help homeowners clean up what was left behind. The team served July 21-27 in the Black Forest area of Colorado Springs.

William Letlow, blue-cap team leader from Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, said the team included heavy equipment operators, chainsaw handlers and a chaplain. "People in Colorado welcomed us with open arms," Letlow said. "It was devastating out there. Black, burned trees and rubble piled up where homes once stood."

Disaster relief chaplain Tom Drake from Tuskegee Lee Association visited numerous home sites completely destroyed by the forest fires. He said some homeowners saw the fire coming and had only a few minutes to gather some papers and belongings before fleeing in their cars.

The disaster in Colorado touched Drake's heart because he lived in Colorado Springs during the early years of his life. "Much of this area is in sticks. It's a horrible sight to see."



**T**herefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Cor. 5:17

During the week Drake had opportunities to share the gospel with several homeowners. "We gave them Bibles after we talked and prayed with them. They were extremely appreciative of our ministry with them," Drake said.

Disaster relief volunteers Phillip McMillan and Lindsey Mothershed, both from Elmore Baptist Association, ministered by using their heavy equipment skills. "We operated skid steers and concrete and metal extractors to remove pieces of metal and concrete walls, to scoop up ashes and then unload it all into dumpsters," McMillan explained.

### Using skills for God

The two heavy equipment operators worked not only with the Alabama disaster relief team but also with teams from other states. McMillan believes God gave him the abilities he used in Colorado. "I need to use my skills to help people," he said.

Letlow said Alabama's disaster relief chainsaw team cut burned trees and limbs around homes.



Photo by Phillip McMillan

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief's heavy equipment team supports a Missouri disaster relief chainsaw volunteer following the wildfires in the Black Forest area of Colorado Springs.

"Their work enabled the heavy equipment to move in," Letlow said.

Alabama's disaster relief team traveled two days and more than 1,400 miles to get to Colorado. First Baptist Church, Moore, Okla., hosted the group on their first night traveling. During the week in Colorado the team was hosted by First Baptist Church, Black Forest, and Vista Grande Baptist Church, Colorado Springs.

Mel Johnson, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions disaster relief strategist, said he spoke with Colorado Baptist disaster relief leaders and "they were ecstatic that Alabama sent a team."

"Here in Alabama we have disaster relief volunteers ready and

willing to go, and ... they did so gladly," Johnson said.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers from other states are also actively responding to the fires in Colorado, as well as blazes in Arizona and California. Min-

istry to flood survivors continues in Canada, New York and Texas. The long-term response to Superstorm Sandy is at its peak. And volunteers have been distributing clothes to tornado survivors in Oklahoma City. (BP contributed)

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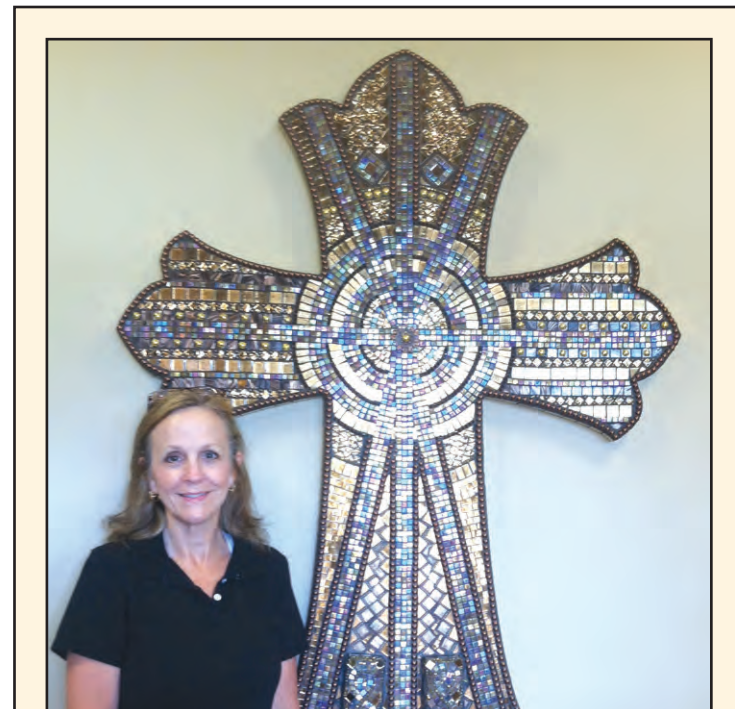


Photo courtesy of Andrea Hunter

### LIBERTY BAPTIST MEMBER CREATES MOSAIC ART

Andrea Hunter, a member of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, began creating a mosaic cross by hand in late 2012. "Being a follower of Christ brings meaning to the work for me," Hunter said. Liberty Baptist minister of music Mike May and Hunter placed the finished piece in the church's foyer in June next to a plaque engraved with 2 Corinthians 5:17.

## Living with a Reverse Mortgage

By Jimmy Dixon

"What is it like to have a reverse mortgage?" Max and Carolyn Youngblood (a retired pastor and wife) have answered:

"Carolyn and I took out a reverse mortgage a little over two years ago after reading Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist*. Jimmy came to our home and he was most knowledgeable, kind and patient — a true Christian gentleman.

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# God-sent program

## Lineville’s Barfield Baptist serves community through day care

By Anna Keller  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Citizens on the east side of Clay County have been desperate for a local day care program, and members of Barfield Baptist Church, near Lineville, in Carey Baptist Association have decided to meet that need.

“There were no day care facilities on this side of the county, and people were driving from one side of the county to another to drive their kids to day care,” said Christy Horn, Barfield Baptist day care director. “We started talking about what a blessing it would be to start a day care at the church, and it just went from there.”

The day care at Barfield Baptist opened its doors in May with the hopes of enrolling 32 children. Just a little more than two months into the program, it’s already at its full capacity of 55 kids (25 are part of the current summer program, and the rest are already enrolled to start once the school year begins).

For Tiffanie Character, whose

5-month-old son, Camden, attends the day care, the program’s opening is a godsend.

“We had nowhere local to take him, and we were going to have to go to Ashland or Alexander City for Camden to go to day care,” said Character, a member of Lineville Baptist Church, also in Carey Association. “The only options here really before this day care were people who keep children in their homes, but they always book up fast.”

Character’s 9-year-old stepson will join Camden at day care (as part of the after-care program) once school starts up in August.

Horn and her staff are not only focused on caring for the children — they also help the parents with

being away from their children, Character noted. One part of the experience she really likes is that the caretakers send photos of the children to the parents throughout the day. For Character — who works an hour away and is at work 10 hours a day — it makes being away from Camden more bearable.

**“The teachers that we hire are missionaries, because they’re telling children about Jesus.”**

**Pastor John Howell  
Barfield Baptist Church**

According to Barfield Baptist Pastor John Howell, the congregation felt called to embark on this ministry for biblical reasons. The day care’s mission is to provide a loving, caring, spiritual environment for children, guided by the lesson in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

“The teachers that we hire are missionaries, because they’re telling children about Jesus,” Howell said. “I would love for every child to have the opportunity to grow up in a godly home. But if they can’t get [godly teaching] at home, we can give it to them during the day.”

In the six years since Howell has been pastor of Barfield Baptist, he says this is the best ministry the church has started.

### ‘Growing need’

“It was a growing need, and God planted the seed in our hearts,” he said. “We’ve had people in our church express that they’ve talked to people who were so thrilled, so excited that we were offering a day care. The children are enjoying it so much.”

Horn and her staff enjoy being with the children as well.

“This is a ministry not just a school,” she said. “Missionaries are needed all over the world, including right here in our own hometown. We get a blessing out of it too.”

## Deceased 18-year-old songwriter’s ode to heaven tops charts

A song about ascending to heaven written by a dying 18-year-old has gotten 7.7 million YouTube hits and at one point reached No. 1 on the iTunes music charts.

Zach Sobiech, who died in late May, wrote the farewell song “Clouds” as an ode, in part, to his unwavering faith in God.

He is remembered for providing hope to people around the world, many of them facing similar situations.

His fight with osteosarcoma, a rare bone cancer, led to the release

of an entire album of his songs, “Fix Me Up,” not long before his death, and prompted other musicians to perform their own versions of “Clouds.”

Near the end, Sobiech found the strength to fly to New York to finalize a record deal through Broadcast Music Inc.

A version of “Clouds” featuring Jason Mraz, The Lumineers and American Idol winner Phillip Phillips drew high praise from *People* magazine, which called that remake perhaps “the most moving celebrity shout-out of all time.”

Sobiech’s story helped raise more than \$100,000 for cancer research into osteosarcoma.

Scores of people wrote the teen, saying how much his words meant to them.

The funeral for Sobiech was held at St. Michael’s Catholic Church in Stillwater, Minn., where his family has been members for 20 years.

“Our faith kept us from despair and kept our eyes focused on what is truly important — eternity,” Sobiech’s mother, Laura, said.

Mike Miller, who helped conduct the funeral, said Sobiech’s music touched “people

who were in a very dark place.”

This is Sobiech’s journey, told through the words of “Clouds”:

*“Well I fell down, down, down  
Into this dark and lonely hole  
There was no one there to care  
about me anymore  
And I needed a way to climb and  
grab ahold of the edge  
You were sitting there holding a  
rope  
And we’ll go up, up, up  
But I’ll fly a little higher  
We’ll go up in the clouds be-  
cause the view is a little nicer  
Up here my dear  
It won’t be long now, it won’t be  
long now.”* (RNS)

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Aaron Shust

Photos courtesy of Centricity Press

# Grace & mercy

**Singer/songwriter Shust shares collection of celebratory songs rising out of his family's sorrow, heartache**

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**aron Shust kind of thought that maybe, just maybe, his family had been through the wringer as much as they could stand. And that was before his wife was reported for child abuse and neglect in April.

"We felt from the beginning that this was an attack from the enemy and were moved to not only pray for truth to prevail, but to worship the Lord in the midst of our suffering, just like Job did when he said 'The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord,'" Shust, a Christian singer and songwriter, wrote on his blog in June.

The abuse accusations came the day before the second open heart surgery for their third son, Michael, who was born with Down syndrome and major heart defects. His older brother Nicky had been battling an incurable disease since birth that caused him to reject many foods. The disease had nearly cost Nicky his life.

"Just when we thought things were leveling off to what we thought was manageable" with Nicky's illness, Shust said,

Michael was born with a tiny, incomplete heart.

"A lot of tears were shed," he said. "We prayed, 'How can we handle this aside from Your grace?'"

God's mercies came through, he said.

But so did the struggles as the family moved forward with two sons bearing the scars of major health problems.

"When things looked like they were going to be health-wise on the up and up, someone in the community accused [Sarah, Shust's wife] of abuse and neglect," Shust said. "We had to jump through all the hoops of child abuse services and the threats of taking our children away."

It was "a nightmare," like living Job chapter 1, he said.

But much like Job, the Shusts' story "is not just about Michael, it's not just about Nicky, it's about God's grace throughout," he said.

God didn't desert Job, and Job "was bragging on Him that there's not another

god like Him in all the earth," Shust said.

What makes Job 1:21 so powerful, he said, is not that Job dropped to his knees and asked for deliverance but that he praised. "I read that verse and thought, 'You know what? I need to praise too.'"

And so he did.

On July 16, Shust released his fifth album, "Morning Rises," a collection of celebratory songs rising out of his family's sorrow and heartache of recent months.

"It's therapeutic to my soul to sing these words when life is tumultuous," Shust said. "I need to write and find songs that I want to sing, songs that

proclaim God as faithful, songs that proclaim God as larger than our situation and our circumstance. I want to sing songs that glorify Him and lift His name up."

The album, he said, is full of Scripture that applies to anyone, no matter what their circumstances are.

"Everyone has their stories, their trials they are walking through or are about to walk through," Shust said. "I think of Da-

vid so often. He preaches truth to himself (in the Psalms). He says, 'Why are you downcast, oh my soul? Put your trust in God.' He's very real with his emotions."

And Shust said that much like with David's psalms, songwriting is a way for him to connect with the Lord.

"He had no audience, just sheep. He was just writing for his time with God," Shust said, noting that many of his own songs don't make it out of his living room because they are so personal.

With music, "if the theology is accurate and the lyrics are right, we draw near to God and He draws near to us," he said. "We forget the greatness of God and we need to be reminded."

Shust said he hopes the album will help people embrace the truth and "look up" if they are downcast.

"My family is going through a dark time right now, but we can say the sun has come," he said, adding that they look to God knowing that "as the sun rises, He will appear."

"We cling to that hope," he said. "We are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel."

To read more about Shust's story, visit <http://aaronshust.blogspot.com>. ❏



'Southern Baptists' financial support gave us the opportunity to come here and see not just one generation but a generation teaching a generation teaching a generation to follow on and follow Christ's footsteps,' Roger Hesch said.

# 'In the hands of God'



IMB photo

## Southern Baptist representative says cancer 'one of the greatest gifts God has ever given me'

**R**oger Hesch should be dead. After stage 4 bone marrow cancer decimated his body, his recovery journey included several life-threatening setbacks — each should have overpowered his ravaged immune system. Doctor after doctor told him the chances of survival were next to nothing.

But God had more for Roger to do.

After graduating from high school in his hometown of Little Falls, Minn., Roger spent a year in Johannesburg, South Africa, as part of an international exchange program that exposed him "to the bigger world," he said.

He and his wife, Meg, met while attending college in Minneapolis and were married in 1980. Early on, the couple made a commitment to say "yes" to God's leading, regardless of what that meant. They said "yes" to Roger attending seminary and serving as pastor of two Southern Baptist churches.

"In January 1986, I was speaking on the Great Commission and while I was preaching, God said, 'You can't encourage other people to do what you are not willing to do,'" Roger recalled.

It was then the couple said "yes" to serving overseas as Southern Baptist representatives with the International Mission Board (IMB).

"We said we'll go where other people can't or won't go," Roger said.

That led them to live in a dangerous country in sub-Saharan Africa with few representatives — Roger was even wrongfully imprisoned for a week. But he and Meg remained obedient, seeing 70 churches multiply to 500 in about six years.

It was after a move to North Africa to lead an international church that Roger and his family — which now included three children — would face their biggest challenge.

Roger was coaching his daughter's school basketball team in 1999 when he began to lose movement — first in his right arm, then his left. North African doctors could not diagnose the problem so they sent him to London.

Doctors there diagnosed him with stage 4 cancer, meaning it had spread to other organs and was considered incurable. Another concern was a vertebra pinching his spinal cord. Doctors worried the weakened and brittle bones in Roger's neck may collapse, snapping his spinal cord.

Within a week the Hesches were back in Minneapolis for Roger to begin chemotherapy. He also had a metal

"halo" screwed into his head to keep his neck upright.

"He was in [the halo] for four months," Meg said. "His head could never touch the pillow because it was propped up on bars; he couldn't turn his neck, and he endured it — just day by day by day — endured such hardship and such suffering."

But after four months of chemo the treatment began to kill his body. His only chance of survival was a bone marrow transplant.

As he lay in the hospital bed following the transplant, Roger told God, "I hurt — I mean, I really hurt."

But God reminded Roger of the pain He had endured.

"His response to me was, 'I hung on a cross; you're lying in a hospital bed. You've got cushions behind your head; I had nails in My hands. You get ice chips when your mouth is dry; they gave Me sour vinegar. ... You have doctors and nurses to care for you; I had Roman soldiers to stick spears in Me. ... You've got Me to cry out to and you know I love you; and I cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"'

"[God told me] 'You have a chance now to know just a small measure of the pain that I went through for you — just a small measure of what I suffered,'" Roger said.

And for the first time Roger truly understood God's grace.

"We always look at cancer and we say, 'Oh, what a terrible thing,'" he said. "I think it's one of the greatest gifts God has ever given me, because I learned so much about God through the experience."

Roger began to recover after the bone marrow transplant but not without complications.

"It was a long road back physically," he said.

Soon after his release from the hospital, with a weak, new immune system, Roger contracted a septic infection, which doctors told him kills 50 percent of healthy people. His blood pressure bottomed out and he had to be airlifted to the hospital — but walked out two days later.

"One of the doctors on the team shook his head and said, '(Roger's) the luckiest man I've ever heard of,' and one of the other attending doctors said, 'No, he's not lucky, he's blessed,' [because] the first thing I said to the doctor when I went there was, 'I know you can't cure me ... there are things neither you can control nor I can control; [things] we have to leave in the hands of God,'" he said.

As Roger continued to recover, he faced one obstacle after another: graft-vs.-host disease, shingles, the fusing of

vertebra in his neck and thickening of the skin on his legs.

"[The doctors] saw over and over and over again God's hand in the way that He did things in my body," Roger explained. "Just the fact that I sit here without steel rods up and down my spine ... but I can move, I don't have neck pain, I can play basketball, I can play golf."

"God did that. The doctors never explained it, there was no medicine that did that — God did that, and I give Him thanks for it."

Following two years of treatment and recovery — and despite physical limitations and setbacks — Roger and his family said "yes" to God once again and headed back overseas in 2001 to Durban, South Africa.

In the summer of 2012, the Hesches left South Africa to begin an IMB role in California. In this three-year assignment, the couple will counsel those interested in serving as overseas representatives.

### Another diagnosis

As they were preparing for the move, the family received upsetting news yet again — this time, it was Meg who was diagnosed with cancer.

Her heart ached as she watched her husband and children struggle with the news. In addition to facing chemotherapy treatments, Meg also had to deal with a transatlantic move and settling into a different culture.

"Through God's great grace and fantastic support of family and friends, I have weathered well the necessary six rounds of chemo, even in the midst of moving and adapting to our new home and ministry," she said. "As a Christian battling a potentially life-threatening illness, the truth is that I am absolutely in a win-win situation, though naturally my heartstrings anchor me to my precious family, friends and ministry I love."

Meg's illness is a reality with which her husband is all too familiar. But despite changes, moves, sickness and new jobs, Roger said the bottom line is knowing God.

"God is faithful and He wants us to know Him, no matter what it takes in our lives," he said. "Our life is not about doing stuff for God but knowing God, loving God and living with Him in a relationship." (IMB)

**"God is faithful and He wants us to know Him, no matter what it takes in our lives."**

Roger Hesch, IMB representative



Roger Hesch

IMB photo