

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Aug. 8, 2013
Vol. 178, No. 31

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

INSIDE



Discovery Clubs continues to thrive under Jimmie Hale Mission

◆ Page 5



Faith and Family Series: Couples who cohabit before marriage show increased rate of divorce

◆ Pages 6-7



Inner-city ministry shares message of hope in Prichard, Chickasaw

◆ Page 19



IMB photo

After enjoying the fast-breaking meal, people stroll through back streets that are now full of clothing and trinkets to purchase during Ramadan.

Walking in darkness

IMB representative reflects on 'meaningless spiritual exercise' of Ramadan

By Madeline Arthington
International Mission Board

This reminds me of a fusion of the Fourth of July in Washington, D.C., and a carnival," I thought as I looked out at the thousands of families and groups of friends spreading picnic blankets on the grass and unpacking carefully prepared packages of dinner.

Others possessively claimed a limited supply of picnic tables.

Regardless of whether or not people actually

kept the fast that day, the pressure of being seen in public conformed everyone into one patient crowd — waiting to eat until the evening call to prayer sounded.

Festival for breaking the fast

I accompanied two friends to Istanbul's historic Sultanahmet district during *iftar*, the sunset meal when Muslims across the world break the Ramadan fast Aug. 7. Normally crawling with tourists from every corner of the Western world, this evening Sultanahmet district was welcoming its own — an almost entirely Muslim crowd.

We moved past the picnickers to the back

streets and found our destination — a rooftop terrace restaurant overlooking the Bosphorus Strait, Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque.

A young Turkish couple sat at the table next to us. The servers quickly placed already-prepared Ramadan appetizers in front of them — cheeses, olives, hummus and other Mediterranean delights. Restaurants across the city spend the afternoon and early evening preparing for thousands of people to eat at the same precise moment. It is an exact art, and the servers moved with skill and precision.

As the sun disappeared, the servers appeared in (See 'As Muslim holy month,' page 18)

Coming next week: **BACK TO CAMPUS**

COMMENT

Why Disagree About the Words of a Hymn?

Who would expect the words of a popular modern-day Christian hymn to cause a theological dust up? That is exactly what has happened after a decision by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) not to include the hymn “In Christ Alone,” released in 2001, in its new hymnal “Glory To God: The Presbyterian Hymnal.”

Originally the committee voted to include “In Christ Alone” but with a change to one phrase. The committee proposed changing a line in the second verse that says “Till on that cross as Jesus died/The wrath of God was satisfied” to read “Till on that cross as Jesus died/The love of God was magnified.”

Changing the words of a hymn to reflect theological teaching is a common practice. The first verse of the beloved hymn “At the Cross” by Isaac Watts originally read, “Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I.” Compilers of the “Baptist Hymnal” changed that line to read, “Would He devote that sacred head for sinners such as I.”

This time the song’s authors Keith Getty and Stuart Townend would have none of it and refused permission to make the change. The hymnal committee then voted 9–6 not to use the song because the theology of the disputed phrase reflected the view of a part of the Presbyterian Church but was not appropriate for the diverse membership as a whole.

Outpouring of protest

That decision prompted an outpouring of protest. At least one blogger cited the decision as an example of liberalism in the denomination. Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George was more balanced in his reaction. He wrote, “God’s love is not sentimental; it is holy. It is tender but not squishy. It involves not only compassion, kindness and mercy beyond measure, but also indignation against injustice and unremitting opposition to all that is evil.”

George cautioned that to ignore God’s wrath can result in “a less than fully biblical construal



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

of who God is and what He has done, especially in the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ.”

George is exactly right. The Bible speaks clearly about the wrath of God and warns that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God (Ps. 90:11).

Yet there remains a question about whether God was an angry God at Golgotha whose wrath had to be appeased by the suffering of the innocent Jesus. Sometimes Christians carelessly make God out to be some kind of ogre whose angry wrath overflowed until the innocent Jesus suffered enough to calm Him down. It is the ultimate “good cop/bad cop” routine where God is against us but Jesus is for us.

Some popular theologies do hold that Jesus’ suffering appeased God’s wrath. That is not how I understand the Bible and that is why I do not sing the phrase “the wrath of God was satisfied” even though I love the song “In Christ Alone.”

I take the incarnation seriously when the Bible teaches “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). According to Scripture the One who died at Golgotha was One with the Father (John 10:30). The apostle Paul added, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

As I understand Scripture, Jesus opened a new window through which people could see what God is like. God has always been like Jesus and Jesus has always been like God. That is why Je-

sus said to the apostle Philip in John 14:8–11, “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.”

That humankind was estranged from God by sin is not in doubt. Nor is there any question that the place of that reconciliation was the cross or that Jesus was the instrument of that reconciliation.

Mankind could not overcome being separated from God by itself. God is the one who took the initiative for reconciliation, the One who continues to take the initiative. God wants to forgive. That is why He sent His Son (John 3:16).

God is always the active agent in reconciliation. He is not reconciliation’s object.

One well-known Baptist theologian said it clearly: “Reconciliation is not the appeasement of God. It is God’s own work in restoring man to proper relationship with Himself.”

Certainly the holiness of God means that sin cannot be condoned. That is why the atoning sacrifice of Christ satisfies the demands of God’s holy law. The sacrifice also demonstrates God’s boundless love that goes beyond the law.

The term ‘expiation’

An entry in the Holman Bible Dictionary, published by LifeWay Christian Resources, under “expiation” makes this point. The author writes, “God was not waiting to be appeased (as in the pagan, Greek conception). Rather God condescended to meet us on our level to remedy the situation.”

Scholars will continue arguing about whether the sacrificial system of the Bible, of which Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, had God as its subject or its object. If He is the subject then God acted to cover and forgive sins through the sacrificial system. If He is the object then God received the offerings for sin that in some ways pacified His anger and need for justice.

Again the Holman Bible Dictionary says, “In the New Testament setting, this would mean that on the cross Jesus either dealt with the evil nature of human sin and covered it so that God forgives it (subject) or it means that Jesus satisfied God’s holy anger and justice so that forgiven sinners could freely enter the presence of the holy God” (object).

That is the essence between the disputed phrases in the song “In Christ Alone.” One emphasizes “the love of God was magnified” (subject); the other “the wrath of God was satisfied” (object). Whichever phrase one chooses to sing it must be remembered that it is God’s grace that initiated the sacrifice of Jesus to provide covering and forgiveness for our sin and that His sacrifice satisfied the holy demands of God’s righteousness for sin to be punished.

But God is not the enemy. He is our seeking Friend (Luke 15). That is why I prefer to focus on His love evidenced at Calvary rather than on His wrath.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

DESPERATE SITUATIONS

This letter is in reference to an article in the May 16 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*. The article was about the need for churches to be equipped to deal with persons who suffer from depression and other mental illnesses.

In the article, Frank Page told about the suicide of his daughter. I can relate to their grief because on Sept. 23, 2008, my only son, at 24 years of age, shot himself in the head standing just a few feet away from me in our front yard.

I learned later that my son had confided in a Christian leader about his situation and (that person) had done nothing to remedy the situation.

Honestly I don’t think he knew how to help my son because I didn’t either. I only knew how to pray for him. I still carry a lot of grief and guilt because I didn’t know how to help my child in this desperate situation.

Thank you for your efforts Pastor Page and *The Alabama Baptist*. My prayers go out to anyone who has

suffered the loss of a child in such a tragic way.

Edith Foster
Tallassee, Ala.

‘INSPIRING, INFORMATIVE’

The article in the June 27 issue “From Addict to Pastor” was one of the most inspiring and informative pieces of writing I have ever read. Writer (See ‘Letters,’ page 18)





"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)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org. Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$13
Individual — \$20.95

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash
Executive Editor

Grace Thornton
Assistant Editor

Neisha Fuson
Editorial Assistant
for Online Communications

Julie Payne
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Associated Baptist Press (ABP), Religion News Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18), Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Circulation Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Member of
Alabama Press Association

'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008,
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
as judged by Associated
Church Press, Evangelical
Press Association or Religious
Communicators Council



Photo courtesy of Mariah Walker

Alabama Baptist Mariah Walker and a youth team from Atlanta lead Vacation Bible School in a village in the jungle of Ecuador.

'Walk of faith'

Thomasville teen spends five weeks in Ecuador sharing Jesus, helping women

By Rose Walker
Special to The Alabama Baptist

For 17-year-old Mariah Walker, the scariest part of going alone to Ecuador was "when I officially said goodbye to my family in the Atlanta airport, because from that point on began the walk of faith."

But God was faithful all the way to the end of her trip, said Walker, a member of Thomasville

Baptist Church who spent five weeks doing missions work in the South American country this summer through Kaleo Kids.

While there, she lived with Boris and Fernanda Salinas, directors of Fundacion Dunamis (Dunamis Foundation), a ministry to women who have been rescued from human trafficking. All the women have different stories, but (See 'Teen,' page 8)



Photo courtesy of Mariah Walker

Mariah Walker (right) spent several weeks with Boris and Fernanda Salinas who direct the Dunamis Foundation in Quito, Ecuador. She became very close to them and their 3-year-old daughter, Zoe.



Photo courtesy of Mariah Walker

Crowded buses are the main means of transportation for many in Quito, Ecuador.

New discovery

Samford professor leads archaeological dig, uncovers remains of Jewish village in Israel

An archaeological expedition directed by Samford University religion professor James Riley Strange has uncovered the remains of an unfamiliar Jewish village in the Galilee sector of Israel. Strange and fellow directors Mordechai Aviam of the Institute for Galilean Archaeology at the Kinneret Academic College in Israel and David Fiensy of Kentucky Christian University announced the discovery this week.

The remains include an ancient synagogue, houses and massive evidence of pottery production in the ancient Jewish village of Shikhin, near the ancient Jewish city of Sepphoris (Zippori).

The site is important because it teaches about Galilean Jewish village life and its economy at the birth of both Christianity and the Judaism of the Talmud, according to Strange.

The sites are about 5 miles northwest of Nazareth.

"The site of the discovery has been abandoned, except for agriculture, ever since the mid-fourth century A.D.," said Strange. "The buildings came down and people used its stones in other nearby buildings, then those buildings were destroyed and the stones were re-used again."

Working with students

He and his colleagues worked with a team of college students on the dig. Included were Samford students Jonathan Sansom and Richard Shaw. Aaron Carr, a 2012 Samford graduate who has dug on teams led by Strange since 2009, is a staff member of the dig. Samford alumnus Kay Clements is a volunteer.

Strange has taught archaeology courses at Samford since 2007 and taken Samford students on archaeological expeditions to Galilee since 2009.

He and the students have

worked at the Shikhin site since 2011.

"We surveyed the site in 2011 and made the first excavation at the site in 2012," he said.

The excavators noted that the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, mentions Shikhin as one of the earliest Jewish settlements in Galilee at the time of the Hasmonaean dynasty, which ruled in about 140–63 B.C. The Talmud mentions it as a village of potters near Sepphoris.

Pottery fragments

The team was surprised by the large number of molds for making oil lamps (seven) found at the site, proof that the village potters produced various types of oil lamps in addition to many common pottery forms. "One small fragment of an oil lamp is decorated with a Menorah and Lulav (palm branch)."

The Excavations at Shikhin are a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional, international, cultural heritage project whose goal is the re-

covery and preservation of the site of Shikhin in the Lower Galilee of Israel.

The site is located at the northern edge of Zippori National Park.

Samford provost and executive vice president J. Bradley Creed noted, "The remarkable discovery at Shikhin by Dr. James Strange and his collaborators is the fruit of many months of skilled and patient effort. I am particularly grateful that under Dr. Strange's tutelage, Samford students have been involved in the project which has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them and an incredible learning opportunity. This international, cultural heritage project is a boon to the field of archaeology and historic preservation as well as a significant contribution to a richer understanding of human civilization and society."

For more information on the Shikhin archaeological dig, go to www.samford.edu/shikhin. (SU)



Photo courtesy of Samford University
The team found a small fragment of an oil lamp decorated with a Menorah and Lulav (palm branch).



Members of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, 'cross over' from the mobile chapels they have been using for more than two years to the new building July 14 following the morning worship service.

Photo by Jenni Dollar



Photo by Jenni Dollar



Photo by Steve Bell

'Unshaken'

Phil Campbell's Mountain View Baptist dedicates building

Members of Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, will never forget the devastation they suffered April 27, 2011, when one of the many tornadoes that trampled the state that day smashed their beloved church building.

But now they have new memories.

Following two years and three months worth of decision-making, planning and construction, Mountain View Baptist's new building is in use.

On July 14, members "crossed over" from the temporary worship and education mobile chapels provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board

of Missions to the new building. They held their first worship service in the new building July 21, and the dedication service was July 28. Representatives from three state Baptist entities and Builders for Christ, the group that constructed the majority of the building during the summer of 2012, were present for the dedication service.

Pastor Sammy Taylor told the nearly 400 people in attendance that Mountain View Baptist is "re-built and ready to stand."

"God's plan was for us to rebuild and His people said, 'Yes,' and here we are," Taylor said.

Reading from 1 Corinthians 16:13, Taylor challenged members to keep watch now that the

new building is completed. "We dedicate ourselves to be alert, stand fast and be courageous." (TAB)



Mountain View in May 5, 2011 issue



Photo by Steve Bell

Nearly 400 people — including state Baptist leaders and building volunteers from across the nation — help celebrate the newly built Mountain View Baptist Church building July 28.

Creating a lasting impact



Photo courtesy of Discovery Clubs

A Discovery Clubs mentor shares a message from the Bible with students during a club meeting. Students also have a time of singing and Scripture memorization.

Discovery Clubs continues to thrive under Jimmie Hale Mission in Alabama

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Tony Cooper was intrigued. As he began to learn about the mission of Discovery Clubs — to reach kids in public elementary schools with the gospel during afterschool hours — the word that came to his mind was “awesome.”

“Getting the gospel message to these kids is just a wonderful opportunity,” said Cooper, who serves as the executive director of Jimmie Hale Mission, a nonprofit organization comprised of several Christian ministries that reach out to the hurting and homeless.

Cooper began noticing in the Discovery Clubs newsletters that requests for volunteers and funding challenges were some of the organization’s primary messages to supporters. A thought then came to him — the challenges Discovery Clubs was facing were ones that Jimmie Hale Mission could potentially help with.

It wasn’t long before Cooper approached the director of Discovery Clubs, Sharon Ezell, with the concept of a possible part-

nership, and they both consulted with their boards about the idea.

Soon after, Discovery Clubs came under Jimmie Hale Mission.

“Now they are an official part of Jimmie Hale Mission, just like our other programs like Jessie’s Place, Royal Pines (Recovery) Center and several Mission Possible Bargain Centers,” Cooper explained of the merger, which became official in February 2012.

‘Preventative arm’

While Discovery Clubs’ primary mission is to spread the gospel message to children, Cooper also views the ministry as a “preventative arm” of Jimmie Hale Mission. If Discovery Clubs can reach children early, “hopefully they won’t be needing (Jimmie Hale Mission’s) services down the road,” he said.

Discovery Clubs, which began in Alabama in 2003 as Discovery Clubs of Alabama, has not changed its structure, purpose or mission. The clubs last for one hour on participating school grounds after classes are dismissed for the day. Each grade is divided into a boys’ class and a

girls’ class, with some grades even yielding multiple classes for boys and girls because of school size.

During a club meeting, students have snack time followed by singing, a Bible study and Scripture memorization. Ezell said the goal is to have three to four volunteers, also known as Discovery Clubs mentors, leading each class.

One of these mentors is Marie Duncan, a member of North Clay Baptist Church, Clay, who has volunteered with Discovery Clubs for nearly nine and a half years. A retired high school teacher and also a Sunday School teacher for 50 years, Duncan’s role in Discovery Clubs has been a perfect fit. “When I heard Sharon speak about [Discovery Clubs] I thought, ‘That is for me. I want to do something for kids that will make a difference,’” she said.

Duncan, who volunteers for the club that meets at Chalkville Elementary School, noted many positives about Discovery Clubs’ connection to Jimmie Hale Mission. “Jimmie Hale Mission is just so established with so many volunteers and so much support from people at large that we feel like we’re surrounded with people who do good work,” she noted. “And we know we have Jimmie Hale Mission as a support.”

Duncan also noted the impact Discovery Clubs has had on children. “Our major goal is to see these children know who Jesus is and give their life to Him and always have His words hidden in their hearts,” she said. “I’ve really been blessed by all of it. ... We (the mentors) usually have a good story to tell of the week before of something that happened in the class.”

And there are many stories Ezell can share about the clubs’ lasting impact, like the story of a girl who remained calm as tornadoes ripped through her area. As the girl’s family was moving to a safe place, she said, “Let’s pray,” and after praying said, “I learned that in Discovery Clubs.”

Discovery Clubs is currently operating in schools in Birmingham City, Trussville City, Jefferson County, St. Clair County and Shelby County school systems. “The vision continues to be expansion and trying to get into more schools,” Cooper said. “That will always be the vision — trying to get more kids exposed to Discovery Clubs and the gospel message that’s presented.”

Before any additional expansion of Discovery Clubs happens, Cooper said two priorities are ensuring that current areas of Alabama are covered and increasing the number of volunteers.

According to Ezell, the most significant challenge Discovery Clubs continues to face is securing volunteers. “We call churches (and) go to churches to do recruiting,” she said. They also set up booths at events such as city festivals, and volunteers aid in recruiting through word of mouth.

Cooper noted that Alabama Baptists can pray with Discovery Clubs about additional volunteers, “those people that God wants to be involved and have a love for kids and time available for the commitment,” he said. “We’re in a holding pattern waiting to see who God raises (for) us.”

For more information about Discovery Clubs and volunteer opportunities, call 205-941-9852 or visit www.jimmiehale-mission.com/content.asp?id=398587.



COOPER

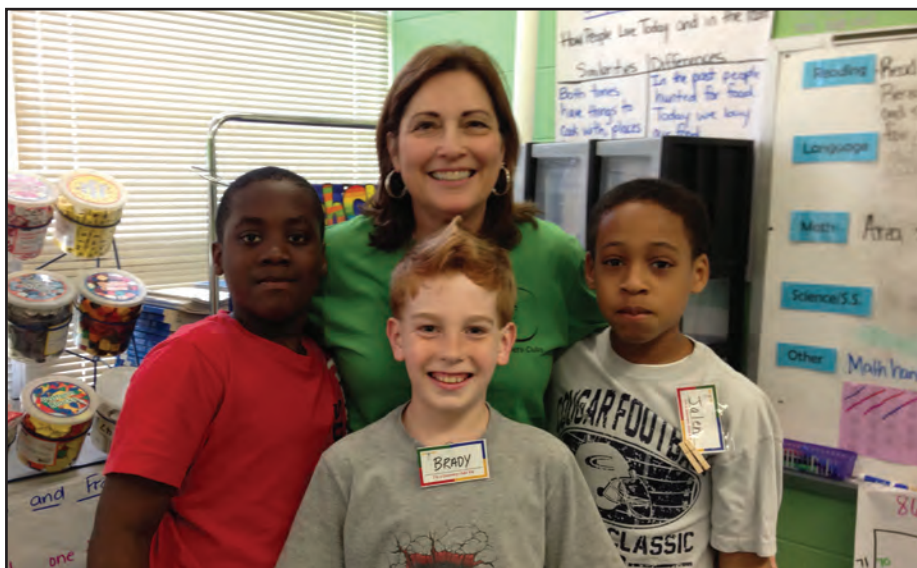


Photo courtesy of Discovery Clubs

Sharon Ezell (back, center), director of Discovery Clubs, said up to 1,400 students participate in Discovery Clubs each week. The clubs are in 31 schools, and there are about 400 trained volunteer mentors reaching students with the gospel.

**“Our major goal is to see these children know
who Jesus is and give their life to Him.”**

Marie Duncan
Discovery Clubs volunteer mentor

'A HEAD START'

Jason and Hannah had known each other for many years before they began to date in college. Their families had attended the same church until Hannah's parents divorced during her junior year in high school. After the divorce, Hannah's parents had struggled financially, but loans and a work-study job made it possible for her to pursue her college degree and live in campus housing. Jason lived off campus in a house purchased by his family. As their relationship progressed, Hannah began to spend more and more of her free time at Jason's house. They began to joke about how much money she could save by moving in with him, then talked more seriously about the possibility. "We're going to be married when we finish school anyway," Jason reasoned. "Why shouldn't we get a head start on our future?" Hannah knew that taking their relationship to the next level contradicted her Christian values, but it would be so much cheaper and easier to move in with Jason. After all, she thought, we're in love. And these days, everybody lives together before marriage. So it's OK. Right?



istockphoto.com

Living together

Couples who cohabit before marriage show increased rate of divorce, decreased satisfaction

By Larry Daniels and Steve Trader
Pathways Professional Counseling

Fifty years ago, couples who openly lived together before marriage were rare. In 1960, 450,000 unmarried couples lived together in the United States. Today there are more than 7.5 million unmarried couples cohabiting.

Another trend is that fewer people in the United States are married. In 1960, 72 percent of all adults ages 18 and older were married, but more recent statistics show that only 51 percent of American adults were married in 2011, an all-time low, according to the Pew Research Center.

For Christians, these statistics about cohabitation and marriage are deeply troubling. According to God's Word, any sexual relationship outside of marriage is contrary to God's will (1 Cor. 6). Much research suggests that couples who live together prior to marriage have an increased rate of divorce and decreased satisfaction in their relationship than couples who marry without ever cohabiting.

David Olson and Peter Larsen of Life Innovations — a Minneapolis-based marriage counseling resource center — have studied marriage in cultures and countries throughout the world for more than 30 years to

develop "PREPARE/ENRICH," a program that provides assessments and tools for counselors, clergy members, mentors and other marriage educators.

Comparing couples

In the article "Cohabitation and Relationship Quality in Dating and Engaged Couples," Olson and Larsen compare dating couples with cohabiting couples across a range of categories, including communication, conflict management and finances.

Olson and Larsen found that dating couples who were not living together tended to score higher in most relationship categories, while cohabiting couples tended to score lower.

Based on their assessments, Olson and Larsen suggest that the lower-scoring couples, whom the researchers call "Conflict-Ed," have an increased risk for divorce once married, as well as a lower rate of marital satisfaction.

Risks for children also increase when their parents are not married, a statistic that is even more troubling considering that more and more children are being born outside of wedlock. According to the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, about 24 percent of children in the United States are born to cohabiting couples.

And recent statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that fewer and fewer cohabiting relationships result in marriage, which means that children born in these relationships are more likely to grow up in less stable households.

Family instability is generally bad for children, according to Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project and lead author for the report "Why Marriage Matters," a joint project of the National Marriage Project and the Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values.

"Children are less likely to thrive in cohabiting households, compared to intact, married families," Wilcox writes.

"On many social, educational and psychological outcomes, children in cohabiting

households do significantly worse than children in intact, married families and about as poorly as children living in single-parent families."

Wilcox cites federal data that indicates that children living in cohabiting households are more likely to be physically, sexually and emotionally abused than children in both intact, married families and single-parent families.

Multiple transitions

Children also suffer the consequences of multiple transitions into and out of marriage, cohabitation and single parenthood, Wilcox said.

"Such transitions ... are linked to higher reports of school failure, behavioral problems, drug use and loneliness, among other outcomes," Wilcox writes, concluding that

"Children are less likely to thrive in cohabiting households, compared to intact, married families."

Brad Wilcox
director, National Marriage Project

It is important that we as Christians engage the culture in discussing this topic and share our belief about cohabitation as well as the wonderful benefits of marriage — after all this is God’s design. As in all things, we are to ‘speak the truth in love’ according to Ephesians 4:15.

family stability is important to positive outcomes for children.

Other research shows that children and adults in married families generally fare better on economic, health, educational, psychological and social-emotional measures. Several sources show that couples who marry without ever living together have:

- ▶ increased income in the residence
- ▶ increased sense of security, happiness and fidelity
- ▶ increased emotional fulfillment
- ▶ increased likelihood of having health insurance coverage
- ▶ reduced depressive symptoms — for both men and women
- ▶ reduced heavy drinking and reduced overall alcohol consumption in the home, and
- ▶ increased life expectancy and enjoy better physical health.

As Christians, we know that God’s plan is for one man and one woman to be committed in marriage, not in a state of cohabitation.

Truly the operative word in this issue is “commitment.” There are multiple benefits to being married, yet so many people are hesitant to commit in a variety of areas in our society.

Those who are unwilling to commit to marriage may never know the joy and fulfillment that can come from such a relationship.

It is important that we as Christians engage the culture in discussing this topic and share our belief about cohabitation as well as the wonderful benefits of marriage — after all this is God’s design. As in all things, we are to “speak the truth in love” according to Ephesians 4:15.

When we discuss or confront this issue, it is imperative that the person know we care for and love them. This will create a climate where a person will be much more likely to hear, consider and act on what we share. Remember in John 4, Jesus reached out to the woman at the well. He did not condemn her, even though she was living with a man and had been married five times. Instead, He loved her and offered her salvation through faith in Him.

She received Him as her Savior. Her life was changed when she turned from her sin and turned to Christ. Let us approach the issue of cohabitation through the Scripture and with the love of Christ. ☞

God’s plan for marriage

How to respond to cohabitation in the church

By **Evan Lenow**
Southwestern Seminary

Many of us would like to think that the church is immune to the growing trend of cohabitation prior to, or instead of, marriage. Unfortunately this cultural trend has crept into the pews as fewer church members recognize cohabitation as a violation of biblical sexual ethics.

Scripture is clear in its condemnation of fornication (a KJV-style word for a premarital sexual relationship). Fornication and fornicators (as well as adulterers) are described as evil, subject to judgment and not heirs of the kingdom of God (Matt. 15:19; Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Cor. 6:9; Heb. 13:4).

Beyond the clear scriptural statements regarding fornication, cohabitation also presents another breach of biblical ethics. God established the sexual relationship between a man and a woman in Genesis 2 as a sign of the covenant of marriage.

God’s covenant

Just like the rainbow serves as a tangible reminder of God’s covenant with Noah that He will not destroy the earth by flood again, the sexual relationship between a husband and wife demonstrates the exclusive, permanent union of marriage. It is so intimate that Genesis 2:24 says the man and woman “shall become one flesh.” Those who cohabit

participate in the “pleasures” of the relationship without the covenantal commitment. This stands in direct violation of God’s plan for marriage that He established in Genesis 2 prior to the Fall.

So how do we address the issue of cohabitation in the church? First remember that cohabitation is not the unpardonable sin. After Paul gives a vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 that says certain people, including fornicators and adulterers, will not inherit the kingdom of God, he states, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

We need to work with cohabiting Christian couples to help them confess and repent of this sin. Ideally this confession and repentance should have a public element to it within the church. This does not necessarily mean that they air their dirty laundry before the church on Sunday morning, but it should at least include their families and those in their circle of influence who are aware of the situation. Depending on the church, it may also include the entire church body.

Second we need to help these couples

separate from their sinful lifestyle. Many couples use cohabitation as a “test drive” for marriage, but it is actually a recipe for disaster. If a cohabiting couple is heading toward marriage, then we need to encourage them to change their living arrangements. If it means a woman

moves back home with her parents, or a man moves in with some friends for a period of a few months, then so be it. If the couple is not willing to do this for the remainder of the time leading up to the marriage, then they are not interested in honoring God with their marriage.

We simply cannot turn a blind eye to the issue of cohabitation. The biblical covenant of marriage is too important to God’s design for mankind to adopt the world’s preferences for pleasure without commitment.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Evan Lenow is assistant professor of ethics, associate director of the Richard Land Center for Cultural Engagement and chair of the ethics department at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. ☞

“We simply cannot turn a blind eye to the issue of cohabitation. The biblical covenant of marriage is too important to God’s design for mankind.”

Considering cohabitation?

▶ Pray and seek out God’s will for your life as an individual and your life together as a couple.

▶ Search the Scriptures regarding God’s design for families: it clearly is for one man and one woman in the covenantal bonds of matrimony (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5–6; Mark 10:7–9; Eph. 5:31; Heb. 13:4).

Search the scriptures.

▶ Seek out godly counsel, preferably from your pastor, older Christian mentor or friend or Christian counselor.

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prov. 22:15).

▶ If children are or will be part of the equation, the lack of commitment will affect them as well. Research has well documented that children need clear boundaries and consistency and

that the marital bonds provide the best boundaries and consistency for children.

▶ Take time to consider major (and all) choices in your life. The decisions you make regarding your relationship today set the tone and direction for how this relationship will go in the future. Moving in with someone of the opposite sex without the covenantal commitment of marriage will lead to a weaker foundation.

▶ Consider that God Himself leads by example. Marriage requires commitment. God commits Himself to us, for He tells us plainly He “will never leave us or forsake us” (Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5,9; Heb. 13:4).

Seek out godly counsel.

(Source: Pathways Professional Counseling)

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.

BETHLEHEM

► **Fountain Church, Monroeville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 18, 10:30 a.m. with Faron McKinley in concert followed by Pastor Michael Leys as speaker. Lunch will follow. Everyone is invited.

BIRMINGHAM

► **East Gardendale Church, Gardendale**, continues its August Alive 2013! Thursday Night Revival Services. The Aug. 8 event will feature Daniel Wilson and George Weeks. For information call 205-608-0889. Allen Davis is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Cody Hale** has been called as the new pastor of **Iron City Church, Anniston**, and will begin in mid-August. He holds a bachelor's degree in science and mathematics from the University of Mobile, a master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Hale has served as student pastor of Hill Crest Church, Anniston, since 2008; as minister of youth



HALE

and recreation for First Church, Talladega (2007–2008); and as youth pastor of Iron City Church (2005–2007). He and his wife, Megan, have one daughter.

CLARKE

► **Evergreen Church, Jackson**, will host its fifth annual women's conference "Women of His-Story" on Aug. 24, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. A light breakfast and full lunch will be served. For information call Alicia Conerly at 251-589-0769. Jim Blair is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Scott Cox** is the new pastor of **Bay Springs Church, Dothan**. He holds a bachelor's degree in science and mathematics from the University of Mobile, a master of divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a doctor of ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as pastor of Southern Heights Church, Berryville, Ark.; Hartford Church; Freeman Heights Baptist Church, Berryville, Ark.; and First Church, Panacea, Fla. Cox and his wife, Loree, have two children.



COX

TUSCALOOSA

► **Corinth Church, Elrod**, will hold revival through Aug. 9. Leonard Hill will speak and there will be special singing. Everyone is welcome. Victor Bonner is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Loachapoka Church** will host a dedication service for its new fellowship hall Aug. 24, 11 a.m. All church members and all others who volunteered their time to complete the building are invited. Lunch will be served. Phillip Nelson is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Spring Hill Church, Cullman**, will host a Colossal Coaster World Reunion on Aug. 24, 5–7 p.m. at the church pavilion. There will be food, games, soapbox cars and lots of VBS memories. This will be a good time to pick up your class pictures and DVDs. All VBS attendees are encouraged to attend. Frank Wood is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Antioch Church, Double Springs**, will celebrate its 102nd anniversary Aug. 25, 9 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Bama Blu-Grace will sing and Al Hood will speak. Everyone is invited. Warren Wilson is pastor. ► **Grace Church, Haleyville**, will ordain Darrell Riddle as a deacon Aug. 25, 2 p.m. Refreshments will be served afterward. Everyone is invited. Ricky Thrasher is pastor.

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Marion Association DOM Gallups to retire

Mark Gallups, director of missions (DOM) for Marion Baptist Association for more than nine years, may be retiring from his role effective Aug. 31, but don't expect him to stop serving in ministry altogether. "There's no discharge from God's army as far as I'm concerned," he said.

Gallups, who previously served in the military and was honorably discharged in 1975, was licensed under the pastorate of Jim Ballard at Oakland Baptist Church, Birmingham, and was later ordained under the ministry of Charles Ballew, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Winfield. Gallups began working in children's ministry and later served churches in Alabama and Mississippi as pastor. His first pastorate was Damascus Baptist Church outside of Jackson, Miss., and his most recent pastorate was Westmont Baptist Church, Birmingham, where he served for eight years before becoming Marion Association's DOM.

Gallups said his tenure at the association has opened up new doors of ministry for him. "It's like any other ministry — you have your ups and your downs, your heartaches (and) your joys. This has been a good time," he said. "We've seen God do a lot of amazing things."

As DOM, Gallups has seen the debt-free rebuilding of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hackleburg, after it was destroyed by the April 27, 2011, tornadoes. "We did a lot of work through there," he said, noting that donations for the church's rebuild came from as far away as Pennsylvania.

Another highlight of Gallups' tenure was the completion of the Primera Iglesia Bautista, Hamilton, church building, which now houses a thriving ministry. In his first year at the association in 2004, Gallups helped raise enough finances to finish the church. "There's no telling how many people have been saved" through this ministry, he said, adding that some of the men who have accepted Christ have even started new churches in Mexico and Colombia.

Gallups noted that when he retires, he will greatly miss the association's missions trips. Groups have ministered in Texas, Wyoming, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio and West Virginia, and this year, they helped build a church closer to home in Altoona.

Gallups' post-retirement plans include short-term volunteer missions work, chaplaincy, fill-in and interim preaching and revivals.

He and his wife, Donna, have two sons. The association will hold a retirement reception for Gallups on Aug. 25 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the associational office. To contact Gallups, call 205-921-7572. (Julie Payne)



GALLUPS

Former Alabama minister Gibson retires

James Gibson, who served in ministry in Alabama for nearly 20 years, retired in July. Most recently Gibson served as pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss., for four years.

Gibson attended Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville, Fla., before transferring to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He served as pastor of several churches in Mississippi as well as a brief pastorate in Toledo, Ohio, before serving at Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsedale, from 1990 to 2005. He then served as senior adult minister for First Baptist Church, Birmingham, from 2005 to 2009.

Following his role at First, Birmingham, Gibson served as pastor of New Hope Baptist, the same church where he initially surrendered to ministry and the church where he and his wife of 55 years, Bettye, were married.

The church held a retirement reception for the Gibsons before their recent move to Bessemer.

"It's been a joy to serve the Lord," Gibson said, noting that his children all serve in various aspects of ministry as well.

The Gibsons have three children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Gibson said he is available for supply or interim preaching. He can be contacted at 205-441-5471. (Julie Payne)



GIBSON



Photo by Mariah Walker

Mountains overlook Quito, Ecuador, where Mariah Walker served five weeks this summer helping the Dunamas Foundation, which helps get women who are rescued from trafficking back on their feet.



Photo by Mariah Walker

The girls at Dunamas Foundation in Quito, Ecuador, learn jewelry-making as well as other practical skills.

Teen ministers to women rescued from trafficking

(continued from page 3)

all are "warlike," dealing with anger and psychological trauma, Fernanda Salinas said. The women learn to provide for themselves by making jewelry from the tagua plant.

Walker, who loves photography, was able to help the foundation this summer with the monthly prayer letter, photos and promotional pieces for the jewelry. She also helped with cooking and child care for the women.

"I have been encouraged by Mariah's unwavering spirit for years," said Rob Hilbun, youth pastor for Thomasville Baptist. "We have been so proud of her boldness to follow the Lord." ❏



IMB photo

Mothers carry their children and belongings as they flee from Syria. Christian workers say Syrian refugees are responding to the hope they find in the gospel.

'Frightening' rate of refugees

United Nations says Syria refugee crisis worst since Rwanda genocide

The civil war between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebel fighters has sparked a refugee crisis that the United Nations (U.N.) says is the worst in nearly two decades.

"We have not seen a refugee outflow escalate at such a frightening rate since the Rwandan genocide almost 20 years ago," Antonio Guterres, the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said at a U.N. Security Council briefing, according to ABC News.

The U.N. reported that more than 1.7 million Syrians are refugees in neighboring countries, while another 4.5 million are internally displaced.

"As the Syrian civil war enters its third year, the human cost of the conflict is growing exponentially," according to a factsheet prepared by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

The factsheet, "Syria's Refugee Crisis and its Implications," was produced after USCIRF conducted a fact-finding mission as part of a U.N.-led delegation that visited Egypt and Jordan.

Among the factsheet's major findings:

- ▶ More than 90 percent of refugees reg-

istered with UNHCR identify themselves as Sunni Muslims.

- ▶ The percentage of religious minorities (such as Christians, Alawites and Yezidis) who have registered with UNHCR are disproportionately small compared to the Syrian population. Most religious minorities are reported to be taking shelter within Syria among co-religionists and in government-held areas. Most of those who do leave go to Lebanon or Turkey.

- ▶ Christians and Alawites are not registering with UNHCR because they fear reprisals from Sunni refugees who might suspect them of being government allies. Minorities also fear if the current regime stays in power and they have to return, the government will view them as disloyal for having fled.

- ▶ Refugees must register with UNHCR to receive material assistance such as food, cash, education and health care. Since many religious minorities in rural areas cannot or do not register, they are left out.

- ▶ The massive flow of refugees is straining the already limited resources of neighboring countries. Iraq, Turkey and Jordan either have closed their borders or limited the daily intake of refugees.

- ▶ Refugees living in host countries outside of camps must contend with scarce housing and high rents, combined with social tensions from sharing resources and government services with native citizens.

"By the end of 2013, more than half of Syria's population, over 10 million people, likely will need urgent humanitarian assistance," the UNHCR factsheet said.

Many of the country's Christians who have not left face dangers at home. Youmna, a 13-year-old Christian girl living in Damascus, remembered how shooting erupted near her school bus one day. "[W]e all dived down, hiding under our seats, waiting until the shooting was over," she said.

Youmna's sister Nashita, 10, said the children at her school were herded into the basement as they waited to see if a nearby plane would bomb the building.

"My classmates and I were all very scared," Nashita said. "Kids around me were crying and shouting at the teachers because they were so afraid."

As the violence rages on, Youmna and Nashita ask for prayers for their country. Youmna specifically mentioned children who have lost their parents. "A lot of our friends have no fathers anymore because they have been killed in war," she said.

Jerry Dykstra, an Open Doors USA spokesman, said, "Please heed the requests of Youmna and Nashita to pray for Syria ... Not only do the children face the daily violence of civil war, but they are also the targets of persecution, including kidnapping, because they are Christians."

"Not only do the children face the ... civil war, but they are also the targets of persecution, including kidnapping, because they are Christians."

**Jerry Dykstra
Open Doors USA**

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

Longing for home

Syrian refugees who miss being home embrace hope of a future heaven

Syrians miss being home. The sense of identity and refuge they find in being around family and friends was sacrificed as many escaped to safety once civil war broke out.

“At the end of a visit, having read a story in the Bible or shared the gospel, I ask [Syrians] what specific needs they have,” said Paul Matheson, a Christian leader who works among Syrian refugees. “Sometimes it would be prayer for healing, and yes they have immediate needs, but without exception, they all ask that they will be able to return to their homeland.”

In an effort to aid those who have fled their homes, the International Mission Board and others have provided Syrians food and resources.

“To our dismay,” said Ruth James, a Christian worker in the Middle East, “we find ourselves overwhelmed by their vast material needs — as well as spiritual and psychological needs — and lacking the resources, both financial and personnel, to seize this unprecedented opportunity.”

According to the United Nations, more than 10 million Syrians and counting will need humanitarian aid by the end of the year. But as fear and worry for family and friends takes a toll, an old hope gives newfound peace.

Before the Arab Spring, “there was so much fear and so much suspicion that people were rarely willing to express their true opin-

ions or ask questions that could be perceived as seditious,” James said.

“Any time we spoke of Jesus with people, there were a few answers that were almost word for word memorized by seemingly every Muslim,” she said. “There was no wrestling with faith and questions about God — the general complacency and hardness seemed impenetrable.”

But now, James said, the door is wide open.

Unprecedented access

“Access to people who were once seemingly impossible to reach with the gospel is now as simple as walking down most major streets in countless cities in Lebanon or Jordan,” she said. “So many refugees who have received food or blankets or diapers and milk for their babies have been even more desperate to hear about the God who sees them, who knows them and who has not abandoned them.”

The number of evangelical Syrians is still very small, James said, but the believers they know in the area have been “heroic” through the turmoil, she said.

“Though they have lived in Lebanon for many years, they have continued to make regular trips into Syria in order to distribute funding coming from outside, through food, hygiene products and [meeting] other needs they encounter,” James said. “They continue to come and go at great risk to themselves and are finding Syrians, both Christian background and Muslim background, desperate for the hope they offer in the name of Jesus.”

Many Syrians are gathering together week-



IMB photo

Before the Arab Spring, Syrians never questioned their religion because they had ‘so much suspicion.’ But now as they flee the violence, they gladly listen to the gospel.

ly to study the Bible, and most of them were not believers before the conflict, she said.

Matheson said a Syrian woman, after hearing a local pastor speak in her home, began asking questions. “Most people say in the name of a prophet, ‘Peace be upon him,’ so she asked about that and why we don’t say ‘Peace be upon Him’ [about Jesus].”

‘Harassed and helpless’

“The local pastor told her because our Lord is the Prince of Peace, we don’t say ‘Peace be upon Him’ because He’s the one who gives peace to people,” Matheson recalled.

At this house church meeting, the woman gave her life to the Prince of Peace and continues to tell others, as well as host weekly Bible studies.

As the gospel spreads, James and Matheson said they pray for more helpers, for boldness in servitude to God and for the doors to remain open, both physically and spiritually.

“We’re not seeing a great number, and that’s what I’m praying for, to see a harvest of souls coming to know Christ among the Syrians,” Matheson said.

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

Grief-stricken Syrian father struggles to keep going after death of his young son



IMB photo

Khalid (left), pictured here with his children Fahad (center) and Malik, lost a 2-year-old son, Malik’s twin brother, when a tent pole penetrated his chest in a refugee camp in Jordan.

By Joseph Rose
International Mission Board

I’m scared that if I go into the kitchen, I’ll grab a knife and kill myself.”

Khalid spoke many times of suicide during the 90 minutes I spent with him on a recent visit. His story, like those of many other refugees who have fled the ongoing civil war in Syria, is one of deep loss and desperation.

One of his children, a 2-and-a-half-year-old twin son, was killed January 2013 when high winds knocked down the family’s tent in the refugee camp in Jordan where they were staying. A tent pole penetrated the boy’s chest in the middle of the night.

Friends sneaked the child’s body back into Syria in a water cooler so he could be buried beside his grandmother on a hillside near the border.

“Dying by a bullet or a bomb would have been easier,” said the 26-year-old father.

“We came from Syria to protect our women and children, to give them a chance to live. And there’s

nothing here. No food. No water. ... It’s cold. It’s wet. ... There’s nothing. ... Nobody listens to us. Nobody cares. ... We don’t have anyone but Allah.”

My heart broke for this young man and his family. I wanted to tell Khalid not to give up. But before I could get the words out, he told me our visit had returned a glimmer of hope to his heart and soul.

Promised to pray for him

My eyes began to fill with tears. I told him I would not forget him and that I would continue to pray for him and his family.

I pray that this young Syrian refugee family — and the hundreds of thousands like them — will come to be held snugly in the Father’s arms as they gain access to God’s Word and embrace Christ, their eternal Hope.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons. Joseph Rose serves in the Middle East as a photographer and videographer. (IMB)

Hope in the midst of devastation

Women lose homes, face rape, violence

By Eden Nelson
International Mission Board

Sitting in the room drinking our extremely strong coffee, we are updated on the latest occurrences in Syria by a firsthand witness, hearing about her family that was slaughtered. In Arabic that is a word only used for Eid-Al-Adha, when the lambs are slaughtered — very rarely used for murders. So to be termed as the family being slaughtered implies unfathomable brutality.

The slaughter is discussed with downcast eyes and other people across the room tell of other stories they have heard. After talking about Syria for most of the visit, eventually the room grows quiet. A burden that heavily weighed upon each person seems to fill the room. This tragedy is not something people know how to deal with.

How do you live when all you once had is gone? Your home country is completely torn to pieces and you are left in a land that will never be your home. You will always be an outsider with a passport from a country to which you can't return. Many Syrians who have fled are terrified of returning. The fact that they have fled their homeland is a perceived death warrant, so the potential of one day returning seems hopeless.

They have lost their homes, their families, their status and their work, all laid in the rubble of a seemingly never-ending, malicious war. After the long pause, one of the men asks, "Until when?" How long will this last? The people of Lebanon and Syria have seen so much devastation over the past four years.

How does one bear the burden of such destruction and hurt? How do they walk around Lebanon normally, knowing that their family is locked inside of their house in Syria afraid of leaving their home?

They wait for a phone call, willing to answer their phones at all hours of the day in case it is a friend letting them know their family is OK, always waiting, always wondering if today could be the day their family disappears.

Putting pen to paper even to begin to express the details of this war is difficult. Interviewing Syrian refugees who have been deeply affected and hurt by the war evokes an ache in my heart that

I do not fully know how to explain.

Stories of women being raped, brothers being killed, nephews being kidnapped, villages being utterly destroyed, livelihoods being shattered and children being shot. Those are only a few of the horrendous stories I have heard as I journey to learn more about what is happening in this two-year civil war.

To describe in words the pain that is written on these people's faces is not possible.

I try to relate to the best of my ability, but I am unable. I have never been forced to leave my homeland knowing that leaving may mean I never get to return, leaving behind all of my childhood

memories, work, friends, neighbors and the peace of knowing where you belong.

How does one cope with such a loss? How is one able to continue waking up each day when he or she has lost everything?

Zulema said to me, "The Lord is with me, I have no fear."

Wow.

Zulema is a woman I wish all Christians could encounter. Her love for the Lord is contagious and as she sits in what I view as such an awful situation, she says this is the happiest she has ever been. Why? Because Christ is within her.

She leaves me speechless.

The perspective of a Syrian is already difficult to imagine, then to meet a woman so captivated by her God that she has no fear.

'I could learn a thing or two'

I think I could learn a thing or two from my Syrian brothers and sisters, what it means to be content in all circumstances, what it means to look upon tragedy and see the Lord's mercy and love.

Please remember the Syrian crisis. Each time you view an update on the news, pray for God's protection and provision. Pray that the many refugees who have fled their homeland will find home in Christ. Pray they will encounter His peace, His love, His mercy and His salvation in the midst of devastation.

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

"Each time you view an update on the news, pray for God's protection and provision. Pray that the many refugees who have fled their homeland will find home in Christ."



IMB photo

Arabic-language Bibles and Christian books occupy a place of honor on the bookshelf of an influential Muslim community leader among Syrian refugees.

Syrians who flee 'desperate to hear about Jesus'

Zulema left horrors behind when she fled from Syria two years ago, with family members left behind to languish in prison.

But she ran straight into the arms of people she says God put in her path.

"I started to hear from them the most magnificent thing I've heard in my whole life: How to know God," Zulema said. "As I slept this night I heard a voice telling me, 'I sent you those people so you will get to know God more.'"

As the news shares horrific accounts of the war in Syria and many people have left their homes to escape the tragedy, an untold story remains. The tragedy has opened doors for the gospel to be shared in ways that have never been seen, according to Christian workers in the region. Syrians who have never heard the gospel before are finding Christians waiting to tell them in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

"It is awesome to be on the edge of what God is doing," said Catherine Steel, a Christian worker in the Middle East.

Women now meet weekly to hear stories of the Bible, stories completely new to them. They are having visions, reading the Word and coming to Christ, Steel said. "For so long, only 1 percent of Muslim women were turning to Christ."

A movement of this kind is "unheard of," she said.

Families are encountering Christ and turning to Him, while Syrian Christians who have fled the war are experiencing God's mercy in ways they have never seen.

Salman and Basimah are one such Christian couple. They fled after Salman's brothers were killed and his life was in danger.

Eight years after the couple accepted Christ, "the war started in Syria, then we came to Lebanon and again the door opened for us to have fellowship and be close to Jesus," Basimah said. "[The church] embraced us as a family as one of them, and they showed us true love and acceptance.

"My faith was renewed and I started to know more and have a deeper knowledge about the Bible and my Savior," she said. "Our only refuge is the Lord. He is the one who is helping us to adapt with this new

situation and the difficult times that we are facing."

Christian workers are hearing stories and watching a movement they say is miraculous. "Many are gathering together, sometimes more than once a week, to study the Scripture together and fellowship," said Ruth James, a Christian worker in the region.

Zulema is one of those who met Christ this way. After she fled Syria and was embraced by Christians, she began to read the Bible and ask questions. Two months later, she decided to follow Christ.

"The word of God is becoming very close to my heart as I read the Bible," she said. "I am memorizing what's in there and it is becoming part of me. I was drowning in a deep sea and someone came and rescued me. My hope is that many would experience that rescue as I did."

Faith questions emerge

James said many are experiencing just that.

"They are so cut off from the outside, and many feel they have been completely abandoned by the world and may be wondering if they have been abandoned by God as well," James said. "In that moment, in that place of desperation when the things they have been taught about God are being eroded by the reality of the suffering that they have endured at the hands of their 'brothers' in Syria as well as in their host countries, they are desperate to hear about Jesus."

Syria was once a country where Jesus was not openly spoken about and faith questions were not brought to the light. Now everything has changed, James said.

Steel looks at the situation in Syria and sees it as the story of God's redemption in history — brokenness to hope. "We know what caused it and we know what can fix it. And we have a hope," she said. "No matter how bad and how complicated things get, we have hope."

She asked for Christians around the world to advocate for the Syrian people, knowing there is more to the story. "Please pray, 'God, Syria's broken, come make it right — whatever it takes, that they may see your gospel,'" she said.

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



Dr. John King, Birmingham Baptist Association associate executive director of church/community relations, addresses attendees at the Princeton Baptist Chapel dedication.

Princeton Baptist's Chapel Dedicated in Faith

This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. (Psalms 118:23)

By Jennifer Jackson
Photographs by Robert Farley

In a ceremony focused on gratitude toward the generosity of others, Princeton Baptist Medical Center recently held a dedication ceremony for its new chapel that was constructed as part of the hospital's \$57 million expansion project.

A focal point in the round, the Princeton Chapel is showcased in the center of the new East Expansion lobby and provides an inviting

atmosphere for patients, families and visitors of all faiths. The hewn stone and glass two-story structure features the iconic Baptist "cruciform" on the outside — a symbol of the hospital's faith-based mission. The Princeton Chapel provides visitors a quiet, peaceful place for prayer and reflection.

The Reverend Dr. Gary Fisher, Baptist Health System's director of church and faith relations, set the tone for the dedication by reading from II Corinthians 1:2-5:

Praise be to the God ...who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

The passage served as a nod to the intention that the chapel provides a place of reverence that can comfort visitors during troubling times.

Princeton President Betsy Postlethwait followed those sentiments by acknowledging, "by design, the chapel is the centerpiece of our new lobby



Princeton Chapel

and affirms that faith is central to the way we deliver care."

Generous donors who contributed to the "Answering the Call" Capital Campaign funded the chapel construction, ensuring that this special structure would achieve its full potential. Donating countless hours and their architectural talents was TRO|Jung Brannen. The firm's commitment to the project was a testament to their belief in what the chapel will provide its visitors: a refuge from the stressful circumstances that bring people to a hospital. To provide an added touch inside the chapel, Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Pate donated Bibles.

The Princeton Chapel was a lofty dream that has become a magnificent reality. At the dedication, eternal

gratitude was expressed toward those who gave "time, talent, money and prayers to make this dream come true." This generosity will bless many souls for many years to come.

Special appreciation was given to:

- Donors to the Capital Campaign
- Board of Directors - Baptist Health Foundation
- Board of Trustees - Baptist Health System
- Medical Staff of Princeton Baptist
- TRO|Jung Brannen
- Brasfield & Gorrie General Contractors
- Betsy Postlethwait - President Princeton BMC
- Shane Spees - President/CEO Baptist Health System
- Bob McDougal - Princeton Director Facilities Management



Facing Aging

Geriatric Psychiatry services at Baptist Health System care for behavioral changes in seniors.

By Jennifer Jackson

Advances in medicine and enhanced options for long-term care are improving quality of life for today's booming senior population. Still, some seniors experience behavioral changes that can impact their ability to function day-to-day.

Discerning between typical aging and more serious psychiatric concerns for the senior population is a challenge, especially for caregivers or loved ones who may not be ready to face the reality that a spouse or parent needs help. With designated facilities and specialized staff to care for geriatric psychiatric concerns, Baptist Health System stands ready to help.

A former State Commissioner of Mental Health, Zelia Baugh, oversees psychiatric services at the four BHS hospitals. And while she works with specially-trained physicians, nurses and support staff across the System to develop and implement assessments and screening protocols, Zelia's most simplified advice is: "If you think something's wrong, if you

have a feeling, chances are something is wrong. It's at that point that you need to seek help." But she's quick to follow the sentiment with good news. "Many of the behavioral and psychiatric issues facing the aging population can be addressed with medication. The earlier we can diagnose and intervene, the better the quality of life for patients and caregivers."

Beyond dementia and Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's is clearly one of the biggest behavioral problems facing the aged. But most people are surprised to learn that the other biggest problem is major depression. Yet, when you consider the life-changing events that seniors face on a regular basis, it's no wonder — loss of independence, medical problems, death of a spouse or other loved ones, moving from one's home into another environment. All those things take a toll. The four BHS hospitals — Princeton, Shelby, Walker and Citizens Baptist Medical Centers — have designed geriatric inpatient programs to specifically diagnose and treat depression and the

Signs that your loved one might need help:

- Abnormal grief reaction
- Too little or too much sleep
- Appetite changes
- Inability to engage and respond to what's going on around them
- Withdrawn
- Socially isolative
- Unable to manage money the way they used too
- Giving away prized possessions or belonging
- Over medicating (on purpose)

wide spectrum of behavioral issues as well as physical problems facing today's seniors.

Extensive assessments and evaluations, coupled with caregiver interviews and medical exams, provide a clear understanding of the patient's current mental status. Armed with this information, a team of specialists, lead by a physician, works toward a treatment plan that includes medical intervention along with extensive therapies designed to reengage the patient in daily life.

The inpatient treatment lead by psychiatrists, clinical therapists, RNs, social workers and chaplains addresses needs of the body, mind and spirit. Treatment modalities include extensive support and counseling, disease education, guidance for family members/caregivers and social services like arranging for new living situations in an assisted environment.

Answering the call

Zelia works to deliver the same level of care and service in each of the BHS

hospitals. This means ensuring that patients and family members are not only treated, but also cared for.

"What we offer in our Senior Care Units is different from the traditional hospital setting. There's liberal visitation — we believe the family and caregivers have to be an integral part of the patient's recovery. The patients and family need our compassion, especially at this time; it's about just being there, being present. And, of course, we believe that faith and spirituality are paramount to a patient's success."

And within the unique setting is a unique staff. "This is a special group; the staff all believe that what we are doing here is a calling — a ministry — to 'help the least of these.' We're here to treat each and every patient with dignity, kindness and quality care."

For more information or to talk to a trained nurse, call 205-783-3650.

Geriatric psychiatry services are open and available 24/7. A physician's referral is not required, care may also be initiated by a family member.

baptisthealth system
Answering the call.

Citizens | Shelby | Princeton | Walker
Baptist Medical Centers



facebook.com/
BaptistHealthFoundation

1-877-222-7847

Visit us online at www.bhsala.com



youtube.com/
BaptistHealthSystem

NOBTS extension in northeast Alabama considering adding degree programs

Morning devotional time in summer 2012 opened Zach Richards' eyes to a ministry need — the equipping of those called to ministry. God took his burden and gave him a vision for a New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) extension center in his area.

Thanks to his pursuit of that vision, Richards, pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church, Crossville, saw a certificate extension center begin offering classes in his community in January. And soon he may see the expansion of that center to include undergraduate and graduate degree programs. A group of 60 area pastors, ministry staff and directors of missions gathered July 18 at First Baptist Church, Rainsville, to talk about the possibility.

Currently the northeast Alabama extension center offers two fully accredited certificate programs. The first is an undergrad certificate, ideal for those who might not have attended college but who want to study the Bible in a deeper way, said Richards, who serves as director of the extension center. This certificate program also is for those who would like to begin work on a bachelor's degree. Up to 18 credit hours earned in the cer-



AFFIRMATION — Rick Lance (right), executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, affirms Zach Richards for his leadership in bringing the extension center to northeast Alabama.

Photo by Gary Hardin

tificate program can transfer into a bachelor's degree through Leavell College, the undergraduate school of NOBTS. The second program is a graduate certificate. Up to 18 credit hours of classes taken in the graduate certificate program transfer directly into a master's degree.

If sufficient interest is expressed, NOBTS will add two more programs to the center — an undergraduate degree program through Leavell College and a graduate

degree program through NOBTS.

"Many pastors can't pack up and move to New Orleans to attend seminary, but they can come to Rainsville, study and then go home to their families," Richards said.

For the Fall semester, three new classes will be offered at the extension center. For more information about the classes offered at the northeast Alabama extension center, email nealnobts@gmail.com. (Gary Hardin)



Bill requires government approval for Christians in India

MADHYA PRADESH, India — India's Madhya Pradesh state has passed legislation that would send those who convert and their religious leaders to prison for failing to obtain permission from authorities at least one month prior to conversion.

The bill requires the governor's signature before becoming law. Existing law in Madhya Pradesh requires those who convert to notify government officials after conversion; the new legislation not only requires prior permission but also obligates religious leaders to report the conversions, and it increases prison terms from one to three years for clergy and converts who fail to do so.

In the Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled state, the bill states religious leaders must fill out an application form giving details of the venue and date of conversion ceremonies and provide a list of names and addresses of those seeking conversion. This application has to be submitted at the district magistrate's office a month before conversion.

With India already on a "watch list" of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, India's Christians were aghast at the bill's level of interference in private personal belief. In August 2012, the Himachal Pradesh High Court struck down similar legislation.

The bill is an amendment to Madhya Pradesh's existing "anti-conversion" law of 1968. Ironically called "Freedom of Religion Acts," such laws forbid forcible or fraudulent conversions, but Hindu nationalists have used them to arrest and harass Christians with false accusations.

Eight Christians in Iran sentenced to years in prison

TEHRAN — Eight Iranian Christians were charged with "action against the national security" and "propaganda against the system" recently after being arrested in a raid of an evening prayer service. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) said July 18 that the eight members of the Church of Iran were sentenced in Shiraz, more than 500 miles south of Tehran, after being arrested in the fall of 2012.

Mohammad Roghangir was sentenced to six years in prison; Massoud Rezaie to five years. Mehdi Ameruni and Bijan Farokhpour Haghighi were sentenced to three years. Shahin Lahooti and Soroush Saraie were sentenced to two-and-half years and Eskandar Rezaie and Roxana Foroughi to one year in prison. "It is both disappointing and deplorable that the Iranian regime persists in detaining religious minorities on political charges as has occurred, once again, in this case," CSW's Mervyn Thomas said.

Iranian Christian leaders denied that the eight had any involvement in politically subversive activity. CSW press officer Kiri Kankhwende said little has changed in terms of religious freedom for non-Muslims in Iran since the election in June of the country's supposedly more moderate president, Hassan Rouhani.

The eight Christians earlier were given enormous bail terms meant to cause severe financial hardships as punishment, CSW said. The bail amounts ranged between \$80,000 and \$200,000.

Eritrean authorities punish students for Christian faith

ASMARA, Eritrea — Eritrean authorities are punishing 39 high school students for their Christian faith, excluding them from a graduation ceremony, subjecting them to beatings and forcing them into labor camps. After completing a four-month military training required in Eritrea, the students, including 11 girls, have been arrested for their "Christian beliefs and for their commitment to Christ," sources told Open Doors.

After completing school, all Eritreans are required to participate in national service. The 39 students were selected out from 17,000 students of the 26th national service intake who graduated July 13, according to Open Doors. Graduating students then continue to Senior Secondary School to complete grade 12.

Since 2002 worship outside the government-sanctioned Sunni Muslim, Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC), Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea has been forbidden, with Protestant worship a criminal offense. In 2005 authorities also began persecuting the EOC, particularly those in the church's renewal movement.

SSYK Someone You Should Know



By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

RITA MORITZ

Seddon Baptist Church, Pell City
St. Clair Baptist Association



MORITZ

FAVORITE VERSES: Jeremiah 29:11 and Ephesians 3:20

FAVORITE HYMN: "He Knows Your Name"

HOBBIES: Machine embroidery, traveling, poetry and spending

time with the grandchildren
FAMILY STATUS: Married for nearly 13 years to Harry; between them they have seven children, 22 grandchildren and one great-grandchild on the way

Rita Moritz is a writer and member of Seddon Baptist Church, Pell City. She speaks at churches and civic organizations and serves as an instructor in Alabama's court referral program. She blogs at www.preciousprodigal.com. She has written a book by the same name that is currently being considered by a publisher. In addition, her book, "Precious Poems: A Journey of Hope" is available through her website. "In my heart I want to encourage people," she said.

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

A: The example of godly women in the church, for one thing. [Walter F.] Beebe ... (founder of Beebe Publications

and Beebe Evangelistic Association) really disciplined me. He used to say, "God has a plan for you." ... I had godly Christian women and pastors who gave me direction.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: Time and self-discipline. ... Spending time in prayer and Scriptures every day — I have to in order to write. ... I also need to sometimes take a break and find a balance between work and rest and even some playtime.

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

A: Harry is my partner in everything. He does the entire social media platform (for Precious Prodigal). ... He designed my website and updates it daily. It's not really

my ministry — it's our ministry. All of my kids encourage me to write. I have to add my pastor and church family who support me ... Seddon is the most supportive church I have ever been a part of.

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

A: As long as I have breath in my body, as long as I can touch a keyboard, I will write and speak about our great God, because He can turn a tragedy into a blessing.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: He saved me and gave me a home in heaven, eternal life. ... I cannot describe the greatness of the God that I serve and the difference He has made in my life. ☞

Not insured? Will pay penalty starting in 2014

By Sondra Washington
and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Beginning in 2014, people who can afford health insurance and do not have what is being called “minimum essential coverage” may have to pay a fee on their federal income tax for that year. This type of coverage includes “individual market policies, job-based coverage, Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP (the Children’s Health Insurance Program), TRICARE (for active military personnel, veterans and veteran families) and certain other coverage.”

“The fee in 2014 is 1 percent of your yearly income or \$95 per person for the year, whichever is higher,” according to www.healthcare.gov. “The fee increases every year. In 2016, it is 2.5 percent of income or \$695 per person, whichever is higher. In 2014, the fee for uninsured children is \$47.50 per child. The most a family would have to pay in 2014 is \$285.”

Trying to curtail costs

An individual or family who has to pay the fee will have to pay 100 percent of their medical care costs and will have to wait until the next year’s enrollment period to sign up for health insurance “unless they have a qualifying life event” like moving to a new state or changing income or family size.

The motivation behind this change in the Affordable Care Act is the high cost of health care for uninsured people and its affect on others, reports indicate.

“When an uninsured person requires urgent — often expensive — medical care but doesn’t pay the bill, everyone else ends up paying the price,” www.healthcare.gov states. “That’s why the health care law requires all people who can afford it to take responsibility for their own health insurance by getting coverage or paying a penalty.”

Subsidy available

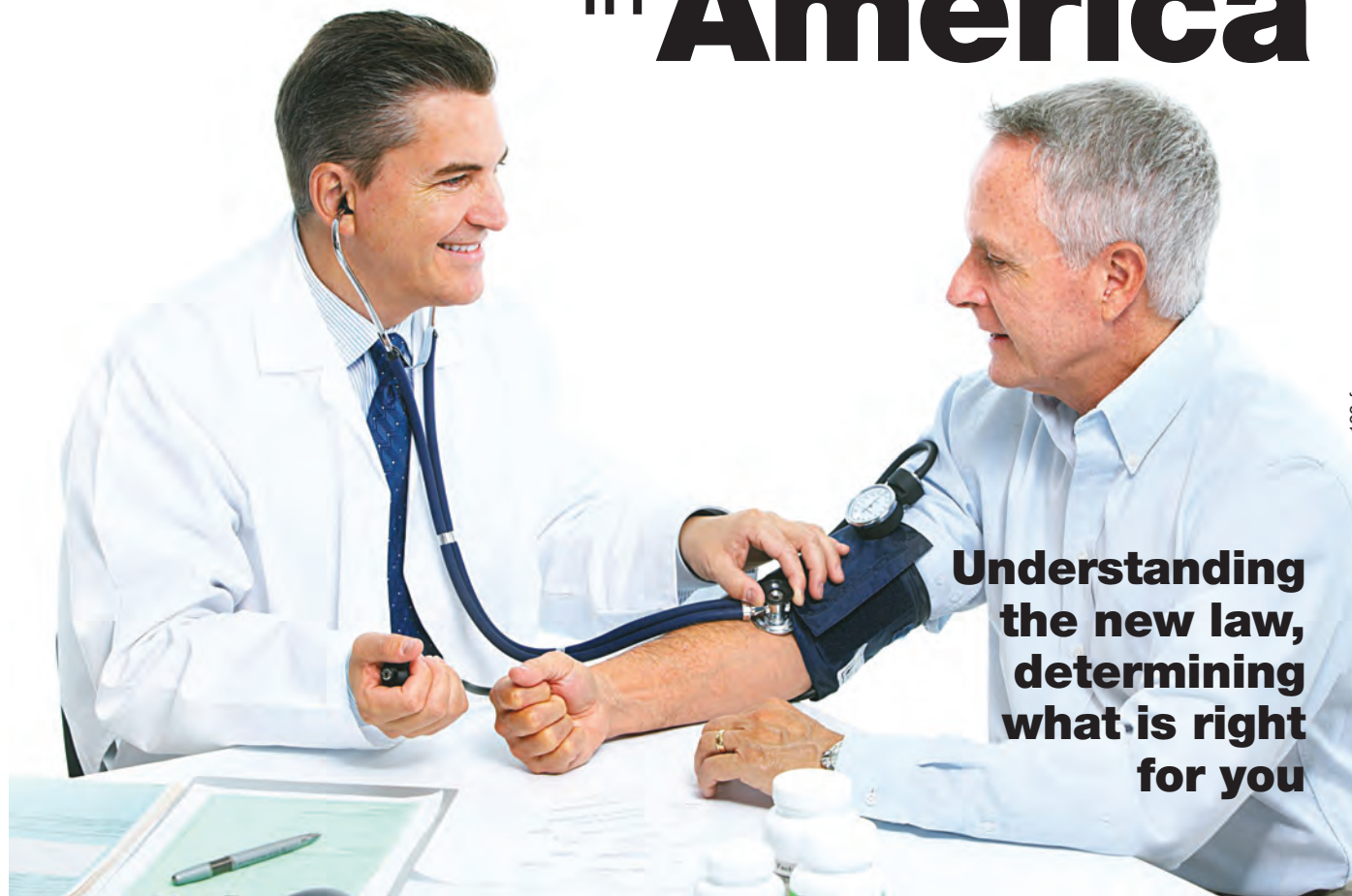
And while health insurance costs historically have been too far out of reach for those making at or below the poverty level, the insurance options coming on the Marketplace exchange are supposed to be affordable.

The Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA) reports that anyone making \$45,960 — which is 400 percent of the poverty level, \$11,490 — or less will benefit from the reduced rate.

“If you are below 400 percent of poverty (\$94,000 for a family of four), the maximum you will pay for your health insurance is 9.5 percent of your income,” reported CFRA in a July 23 release. “The rest will be paid by a federal subsidy.”

According to the latest U.S. Census report, 17.6 percent of Alabamians (See ‘Expansion,’ page 16)

Health care in America



Understanding
the new law,
determining
what is right
for you

123rf.com

Final in a Series

Health care law faces new challenges in Congress

By Sondra Washington
and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Although the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law in 2010, it is still heavily opposed by those who would like to change various aspects of it.

On Aug. 2 the U.S. House of Representatives voted 232–185 to block the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) from enforcing more than 40 provisions of the law including the law’s individual mandate, according to C-SPAN. As the 40th attempt to repeal some portion of the law being called Obamacare, this bill (H.R. 2009) proves that Americans may see additional challenges to the health care law in the future as more portions of the law are implemented.

‘Bar the IRS’

According to www.politico.com, the passing of the bill called “Keep the IRS off Your Health Care Act of 2013” is a “win-win-win” for Republicans who oppose the current health care reform “linking taxes, the IRS and the unpopular Obamacare.” Its purpose is to “bar the IRS from any role in carrying out the law or in collecting taxes to help pay for it,” the news site states.

During the debate, Rep. Dave Camp, R-Michigan, said, “The IRS is already out of control abusing its power to tax and

audit the activities of honest, hard-working Americans. The IRS has betrayed the trust of the American people, yet Obamacare granted the IRS 47 new powers including giving confidential taxpayer information to other departments and applying new taxes and penalties.”

In opposition Rep. Sander Levin, D-Michigan, said, “This bill before us is nothing more than a continuation of Republicans’ blind obsession with repealing the Affordable Care Act. ... It is so clear. The Republican mission is to destroy ... not implement health care reform, and rather than help leading on the issue, House Republicans have spent the last two-plus years trying to mislead Americans about health care rights under ACA and now we can expect more misinformation.”

Although the bill passed the House, *Politico* reported, “Like most of the other 39 House votes against Obamacare, it’s largely symbolic as it won’t make it through the Senate.”

And while lawmakers continue to debate, Americans should educate themselves on the new law and prepare themselves for decisions they will have to make.

Health care reform experts across the board urge individuals to do the proper research required to understand how the new law will impact them. They all agree it is confusing and is continually changing, but taking it one piece at a time makes it more manageable.

With October being the next major milestone with the opening of the Marketplace for enrollment in health coverage plans, individuals who are employed need to know if they are going to have to shop for insurance or if it will be provided by employers. Asking employers what their plans are is a good place to start, the experts noted.

‘Be cautious to evaluate’

Gene Ramsay, president of the Birmingham Association of Health Underwriters, warns small businesses of automatically rushing to the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), however.

In a special column written for the *Birmingham Business Journal* (BBJ, www.bizjournals.com), Ramsay said, “Small business owners can get a federal exchange plan for their company and pay all or part of the cost for their employees. That seems like a great plan and might work in some cases.”

“What those business owners need to realize is that once they start that plan, none of their employees can qualify for an individual subsidy or tax credit to get individual coverage even if they would qualify based on income,” he wrote. “The business owner must be cautious to evaluate what will be best for all of their people before they enter the SHOP thinking they are helping their people.”

For individuals planning to shop in the (See ‘Use,’ page 16)

Options for children

Low-cost health coverage available for families who don't qualify for Medicaid

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

Children also have additional health insurance options with the Affordable Care Act through a program called CHIP, or the Children's Health Insurance Program. According to www.healthcare.gov, "CHIP provides low-cost health coverage to children in families that earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid. In some states, CHIP covers parents and pregnant women."

Like the various insurance choices made available to other people and groups, states will offer different options for children's health coverage. Yet all will have compre-

hensive coverage including routine check-ups, immunizations, doctor visits, prescriptions, dental and vision care, inpatient and outpatient hospital care, laboratory and X-ray services and emergency services.

In Alabama no-cost or low-cost insurance for children include Medicaid and ALL Kids programs. ALL Kids provides benefits for children under age 19.

Some higher income options

"In general, children in families with incomes up to \$44,100 per year (for a family of four) are likely to be eligible for coverage," the www.insurekidsnow.gov site states. "In many states, families can have higher incomes and their children can still qualify."



123rf.com

Now the new health reforms also ensure extended health insurance coverage to young adults up to age 26 through their parents' insurance policies.

"If a plan covers children, they can be added or kept on the health insurance policy until they turn 26 years old," www.healthcare.gov reports. "Children can join or remain on a plan even if they are married, not living with their parents, attending school, not financially dependent on their parents

(or) eligible to enroll in their employer's plan."

These changes can be made through the health insurance Marketplace during open enrollment beginning Oct. 1.

For more information about ALL Kids including qualifications, income guidelines, applications, premiums and copays can be found at www.adph.org/allkids. For more information on coverage for young adult dependents, visit www.healthcare.gov. ❏

Helpful resources

► To download a compilation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (new health care law) prepared by the U.S. Office of the Legislative Counsel, visit <http://docs.house.gov/energycommerce/ppacacon.pdf>

► www.healthcare.gov, managed by U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

► To understand health care reform issues related to ministries, visit www.guidestone.org/HealthcareReform2.

► For information related to Alabama Baptist church life, contact Lee Wright at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at lwright@alsbom.org or 1-800-264-1225.

► The Center for Rural Affairs, a nonprofit corporation focused on family farms and rural communities, is working to understand how the new health care law affects its areas of concern. For more information, contact Steph Larsen at stephL@cfra.org.

► Paige Phillips, executive director of the Alabama Association of Health Underwriters, is continually researching the new law and helping train business owners and employers across the state on it. To contact her, call 205-995-4467 or email paige@awm.cc.

Source: TAB

Veterans eligible for coverage

Veterans without VA benefits will be eligible for health insurance coverage through the health insurance Marketplace, according to www.healthcare.gov. Otherwise they are considered to have the minimum essential coverage required by the Affordable Care Act.

According to www.healthcare.gov, which is managed by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, if you are enrolled in the veterans health care program (TRICARE), VA Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) or

the spina bifida health care benefits program, you don't need additional coverage.

As for veterans' dependents, the website states, "If you're a veteran enrolled in (or a beneficiary of) a VA health care program, your dependents who are not eligible for a VA health care program may use the Marketplace to get coverage."

Veterans who do not already have VA benefits can visit www.va.gov/health to find out whether they qualify for any VA coverage. (TAB)

Upcoming conferences for churches

To learn more about how the new health care reform laws impact your church and other church financial issues, consider attending one of upcoming conferences sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

August 8 — Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association office, Opelika

August 13 — FBC Andalusia

August 15 — Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile

August 20 — FBC Gadsden

August 22 — Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham

For fees and other information, contact Nancy Cornett at ncornett@alsbom.org or 1-800-264-1225, ext. 208. To register, visit www.alsbom.org/churchfinancialissues. (TAB)

'Use' caution when deciding health care options

(continued from page 15)

Marketplace, Ramsay suggested carefully comparing the options.

"Not all carriers are created equal in the eyes of the doctor you might present your new shiny insurance card to," he said. "If a doctor doesn't accept a certain insurance card now, they don't have to change that rule — even if you get your coverage through the exchange."

Ramsay also noted in the *BBJ* article that qualifying for a subsidy or tax credit for health insurance does not mean a check will arrive in the mail.

"When someone finds the coverage they want, that credit will go toward that yearly purchase for health insurance, and they will be responsible for the difference in cost," he said. "No monthly or lump check will arrive. People are buying through the exchange, so that is all handled at the point of sale."

Shane Spees, president and chief executive officer of Birmingham's Baptist Health

System, also noted that tax credits are only available if an individual purchases health insurance through the Marketplace. The credits also are only available if the individual is not provided affordable health coverage.

"If your employer provides affordable coverage, then you have to take it," he said.

But with that comes the verification process, Spees noted.

"Part of the debate now is how to verify if an employer [is providing] an affordable plan. The verification process is up in the air, which complicates the individual mandate," he said. "The position the federal government has taken so far is working on the honor system."

"My best guess is that they will have to delay the individual mandate as well ... because it is so interrelated to the employer mandate," Spees said. The employer mandate was delayed until 2015.

For more information on the employer mandate, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org. ❏

Expansion of Medicaid in Alabama needed, could 'have positive ripple effect,' experts say

(continued from page 15)

live below the poverty level and the median household income is \$42,934.

According to www.healthcare.gov, "Uninsured people won't have to pay a fee if they are uninsured for less than three months of the year, have very low income and coverage is considered unaffordable, are not required to file a tax return because their income is too low, would qualify under the new income limits for Medicaid but their state has chosen not to expand Medicaid eligibility, are a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe, participate in a health care sharing ministry or are a member of a recognized re-

ligious sect with religious objections to health insurance."

Shane Spees, president and chief executive officer of Birmingham's Baptist Health System, is urging Alabamians to take another look at the Medicaid situation in the state.

"The biggest lack of understanding is around the Medicaid program and expansion of that," Spees said. "There's a much bigger picture to see."

"Medicaid is the vehicle that will provide the most coverage for Alabama, not the (Marketplace) exchange. The expansion of Medicaid will have a positive ripple effect on the local economy as well as the state economy." ❏

Preventive care

benefits

FOR ADULTS, WOMEN AND CHILDREN

What are preventive care benefits as defined by the new health care law?

Preventive health services for adults

Most health plans must cover a set of preventive services like shots and screening tests at no cost to you. This includes Marketplace private insurance plans.

Preventive care benefits

Preventive care helps you stay healthy. A doctor isn't someone to see only when you're sick. Doctors also provide services that help keep you healthy.

Free preventive services

All Marketplace plans and many other plans must cover the following list of preventive services without charging you a copayment or coinsurance. This is true even if you haven't met your yearly deductible. This applies only when these services are delivered by a network provider.

1. Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm one-time screening for men of specified ages who have ever smoked
2. Alcohol Misuse screening and counseling
3. Aspirin use to prevent cardiovascular disease for men and women of certain ages
4. Blood Pressure screening for all adults
5. Cholesterol screening for adults of certain ages or at higher risk
6. Colorectal Cancer screening for adults over 50
7. Depression screening for adults
8. Diabetes (Type 2) screening for adults with high blood pressure
9. Diet counseling for adults at higher risk for chronic disease
10. HIV screening for everyone ages 15 to 65, and other ages at increased risk
11. Immunization vaccines for adults — doses, recommended ages, and recommended populations vary:
 - ▶ Hepatitis A
 - ▶ Hepatitis B
 - ▶ Herpes Zoster
 - ▶ Human Papillomavirus
 - ▶ Influenza (Flu Shot)
 - ▶ Measles, Mumps, Rubella
 - ▶ Meningococcal
 - ▶ Pneumococcal
 - ▶ Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
 - ▶ Varicella
12. Obesity screening and counseling for all adults
13. Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) prevention counseling for adults at higher risk
14. Syphilis screening for all adults at higher risk
15. Tobacco Use screening for all adults and cessation interventions for tobacco users

Preventive health services for women

Most health plans must cover additional preventive health services for women, ensuring a comprehensive set of preventive services like breast cancer screenings to meet

women's unique health care needs.

Comprehensive coverage for women's preventive care

All Marketplace health plans and many other plans must cover the following list of preventive services for women without charging you a copayment or coinsurance. This is true even if you haven't met your yearly deductible.

This applies only when these services are delivered by an in-network provider.

1. Anemia screening on a routine basis for pregnant women
2. Breast Cancer Genetic Test Counseling (BRCA) for women at higher risk for breast cancer
3. Breast Cancer Mammography screenings every 1 to 2 years for women over 40
4. Breast Cancer Chemoprevention counseling for women at higher risk
5. Breastfeeding comprehensive support and counseling from trained providers, and access to breastfeeding supplies, for pregnant and nursing women
6. Cervical Cancer screening for sexually active women
7. Chlamydia Infection screening for younger women and other women at higher risk
8. Contraception: Food and Drug Administration-approved contraceptive methods, sterilization procedures, and patient education and counseling, as prescribed by a health care provider for women with reproductive capacity (not including abortifacient drugs). This does not apply to health plans sponsored by certain exempt "religious employers."
9. Domestic and interpersonal violence screening and counseling for all women
10. Folic Acid supplements for women who may become pregnant
11. Gestational diabetes screening for women 24 to 28 weeks pregnant and those at high risk of developing gestational diabetes
12. Gonorrhea screening for all women at higher risk
13. Hepatitis B screening for pregnant women at their first prenatal visit
14. HIV screening and counseling for sexually active women
15. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) DNA Test every 3 years for women with normal cytology results who are 30 or older
16. Osteoporosis screening for women over age 60 depending on risk factors
17. Rh Incompatibility screening for all pregnant women and follow-up testing for women at higher risk
18. Sexually Transmitted Infections counseling for sexually active women
19. Syphilis screening for all pregnant women or other women at increased risk
20. Tobacco Use screening and interventions for all women, and expanded counseling for pregnant tobacco users
21. Urinary tract or other infection screening for pregnant women
22. Well-woman doctor visits to get rec-

ommended services for women under 65

Preventive health services for children

Most health plans must cover a set of preventive health services for children at no cost when delivered by an in-network provider. This includes Marketplace and Medicaid coverage.

Coverage for children's preventive health services

All Marketplace health plans and many other plans must cover the following list of preventive services for children without charging you a copayment or coinsurance. This is true even if you haven't met your yearly deductible.

1. Autism screening for children at 18 and 24 months
2. Behavioral assessments for children at the following ages: 0 to 11 months, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years.
3. Blood Pressure screening for children at the following ages: 0 to 11 months, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years.
4. Cervical Dysplasia screening for sexually active females
5. Depression screening for adolescents
6. Developmental screening for children under age 3
7. Dyslipidemia screening for children at higher risk of lipid disorders at the following ages: 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years.
8. Fluoride Chemoprevention supplements for children without fluoride in their water source
9. Gonorrhea preventive medication for the eyes of all newborns
10. Hearing screening for all newborns
11. Height, Weight and Body Mass Index measurements for children at the following ages: 0 to 11 months, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years.

12. Hematocrit or Hemoglobin screening for children
13. Hemoglobinopathies or sickle cell screening for newborns
14. HIV screening for adolescents at higher risk
15. Hypothyroidism screening for newborns
16. Immunization vaccines for children from birth to age 18 — doses, recommended ages and recommended populations vary:
 - ▶ Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis
 - ▶ Haemophilus influenzae type b
 - ▶ Hepatitis A
 - ▶ Hepatitis B
 - ▶ Human Papillomavirus
 - ▶ Inactivated Poliovirus
 - ▶ Influenza (Flu Shot)
 - ▶ Measles, Mumps, Rubella
 - ▶ Meningococcal
 - ▶ Pneumococcal
 - ▶ Rotavirus
 - ▶ Varicella
17. Iron supplements for children ages 6 to 12 months at risk for anemia
18. Lead screening for children at risk of exposure
19. Medical History for all children throughout development at the following ages: 0 to 11 months, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years.
20. Obesity screening and counseling
21. Oral Health risk assessment for young children ages: 0 to 11 months, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years.
22. Phenylketonuria (PKU) screening for this genetic disorder in newborns
23. Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) prevention counseling and screening for adolescents at higher risk
24. Tuberculin testing for children at higher risk of tuberculosis at the following ages: 0 to 11 months, 1 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 17 years.
25. Vision screening for all children.

(Source: www.healthcare.gov)

Catastrophic coverage available

What if you choose not to purchase health care coverage once the Marketplace opens in October and later you have a medical emergency?

If you are under age 30 or you can prove an acceptable financial "hardship," then you can purchase a plan to help cover expenses for a medical catastrophe, which also covers three primary care visits per year and free, basic preventative care (see story on what preventative care benefits are, this page).

According to www.healthcare.gov, catastrophic health plans "meet all of the requirements applicable to other Qualified

Health Plans (QHPs) but ... don't cover any benefits other than three primary care visits per year before the plan's deductible is met. The premium amount you pay each month for health care is generally lower than for other QHPs, but the out-of-pocket costs for deductibles, copayments and coinsurance are generally higher. To qualify for a catastrophic plan, you must be under 30 years old or get a 'hardship exemption' because the Marketplace determined that you're unable to afford health coverage.

"If you have a catastrophic plan in the Marketplace, you can't get lower costs on your monthly premiums or on out-of-pocket costs based on your income." (TAB)

As Muslim holy month ends, Christians ask for prayer

(continued from page 1)
perfect sequence with tureens of steaming lentil soup, ladling it into bowls just as the call to prayer sounded. It was 8:37 p.m., and the fast was over. As the haunting call to prayer began to fade, the young couple next to us waited a few moments, lifted their glasses and sipped water. Below us, the picnickers began eating their feasts.

The party was on.

We paid our bill and left the terrace to join the festivities. Vendors selling popcorn, cotton candy, roasted chestnuts, watermelon and cantaloupe wandered through the crowd. Two small girls dressed in pink danced in a cloud of soap bubbles coming from a bubble machine a vendor was selling. Cheap, blue florescent, helicopter-like toys were exploding into the sky like fireworks.

"This reminds me of Dollywood," my friend laughed as we meandered through an arts and crafts exhibit. We stopped to watch a glassblower creating a tiny, exquisite horse. Moving on, we saw a small crowd gathered around an *ebru* (painting) exhibit, where for a small fee one could create art using the classic paper

marbling Ottoman art form.

The woman behind the table carefully guided the hand of a young man as he formed a tulip shape with the paint. She lifted the sheet of paper and laid it behind her to dry. "We will be open until 2 a.m.," she told him.

In the midst of the festivities, it was difficult to remember that our entire evening was spent with a people who were celebrating a meaningless spiritual exercise that denies Christ's work of salvation. I recalled my many Muslim friends who have told me that they feel closer to God during Ramadan. It grieves me to remember that they are self-deceived and walking in darkness.

Our evening in Sultanahmet was festive and fun, but it also was sobering. I pray that my Muslim friends will one day participate in an eternal festival that celebrates the Lamb of God.

Prayer requests

The end of Ramadan will be celebrated with an official holiday lasting three days (August 8–10). As many Muslims celebrate by visiting family and friends, pray that God will accomplish a brokenness in many hearts to

understand that their fast has not reconciled them to God.

Pray for Christian workers to speak boldly of Christ's work of reconciliation by looking for creative ways to express their love for their Muslim friends and neighbors during the holiday.

The testimony of many Muslim-background believers often begins with a dream about

Jesus. Pray that Muslims who are having spiritual dreams will encounter believers who would confidently respond with a message from God — the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be intentional

Pray that Christians around the world, even in Europe and the United States, will show in-

tentional and Christlike love to Muslim neighbors and acquaintances during this season and, as a result, that God would bring about many spiritual conversations.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Madeline Arthington is a writer for the International Mission Board based in Central Asia. 卐

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)
Julie Payne really communicated the sincerity of Rev. Garth's heart and his ministry, as well as the amazing work he and his fellow workers are doing. It was also good to see that the Birmingham Baptist Association is working closely with this ministry and expanding its ability to help so many desperate people and bring them to Jesus.

Thank you for the excellent work and the outstanding way you communicated the facts and the feelings. I am truly inspired to do more myself, and I hope many others are also. Please keep up the good work.

Guy Walker
Gadsden, Ala. 卐



Photo by Haley Piersol

ALABAMA BAPTISTS FEED WORLD CHANGERS

Several volunteers purchased, delivered and served a meal to a team of World Changers working in Ensley in late July. Donations came from New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Ensley; Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham; and *The Alabama Baptist*. Pictured here, *The Alabama Baptist* staff members enjoy lunch and a time of fellowship with the World Changers team July 26.

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 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—SENTINEL LEVEL A:** Saturday, August 24, 2013; 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; West End Baptist Church, 2005 2nd Ave. N., Clanton. Led by certified Sentinel Trainers.
- **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 a certified master teacher.
- **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 certified Sentinel Trainers.

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, spoole@alsbom.org.



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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



GLOBALMISSIONS

**NOW MORE
THAN EVER...**

Stay connected
to *The Alabama
Baptist.*



**HADEN TAYLOR
WORTHINGTON**

6-year-old son of Adam and Bridget Worthington and grandson of Billie Davis, a ministry assistant at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Haden's mother interviewed him about *The Alabama Baptist*:

"I'm Haden and I'm 6."

Q: Every week we get that paper and what do you call it?

A: **"The Jesus Paper."**

Q: Why do you get excited when we pull up to the mailbox and get the paper?

A: **"Because I like it."**

Q: Why do you like it?

A: **"Because I'm so excited."**

Q: Why do you like reading the paper?

A: **"Because I like reading about God and Jesus."**



THE
ALABAMA
BAPTIST

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

'In word and deed'

Inner-city ministry shares message of faith, hope, love in Prichard

By Taylor Hamm
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

In a little house in the middle of crime-ridden Prichard, a group of people are shining the light of Jesus Christ in the darkness found in the surrounding communities.

Light of the Village (LOV) is an inner-city ministry that exists to share a message of faith, hope and love and provide refuge for the ones who are living in darkness.

The ministry is located in Alabama Village, one of the most dangerous and impoverished neighborhoods in Prichard, which is near Mobile, and reportedly also is one of the most dangerous and impoverished areas in the state.

LOV was started in 2002 when the founders, John and Dolores Eads, felt led to establish a full-time ministry after being involved in prison ministry. The goal was to share Christ's love, get to know the community and prevent people from ending up in prison.

LOV holds an after-school program three days a week for children in the area, a GED program, Sunday morning Bible studies and many other activities for the community. A big part of their ministry comes during the summer, when they hold a seven-week Bible camp for local children.

Dolores Eads said the No. 1 priority of the summer camp is not just that the children and adults get to know the staff but that they will be led to Christ through the staff.

"We believe that He is the one who can save everybody, and once you come to know Him, He changes you from the inside out and changes who you are," she said. "That's our whole goal."

The annual summer camp has been a part of the community for 10 years. This year marks the first expansion to another campus: First Baptist Church, Chickasaw.

The idea started when the Eadses, being near the church and seeing that many kids involved in LOV live in Chickasaw, saw a chance to expand the summer camp's impact. At first the plan was to have a weeklong pilot camp at the church, but opportunities opened up for enough staff members to be involved, and everything came together for a camp all summer. The camp at



Photo by Taylor Hamm

CAMP FAITH — Children gather in their designated classroom for Camp Faith at First Baptist Church, Chickasaw. Camp Faith is an expansion of Light of the Village of Prichard.

First, Chickasaw, became known as Camp Faith.

Adam Hammond, pastor of First, Chickasaw, said there has been longtime cooperation between LOV and the church and that establishing the camp was "all God."

"God wants to reach the city of Chickasaw in a big way, and He's allowing us at First, Chickasaw, (and) LOV and all of our volunteers to be a part of it," Hammond said. "It's great when the Kingdom of God can come together for a common purpose."

Camp Faith follows the same routine and schedule as the camp on LOV's main campus in Alabama Village, with the added convenience of being in a bigger facility.

The 2013 Camp Faith ran until July 26. A normal day at the camp begins when the children are welcomed at the morning assembly. The group is led in a daily song and is introduced to the Bible study topic they will be discussing that day.

Also in the morning assembly, the children

play a game to get them excited for the rest of the day. Lunch follows the assembly, with different rotational periods consisting of different stations of games, art, music and Bible study. Interns and volunteers from across the country lead each age group, ranging from age 4 to 14.

Morgan Carnley, director of Camp Faith, said the people of First, Chickasaw, have been phenomenal in supporting everyone involved in the camp, making sure needs are always met and keeping their common goal aligned — sharing the gospel.

Love of Christ

"Our primary goal is to reach the kids with the gospel of Christ, with it going out through the Word but also through deeds in individuals," Carnley said.

"In those moments when you can hug and spend time with someone, that's when you know the love of Christ is being shared in word and deed."

For more information about the ministry of Light of the Village, visit www.lightofthevillage.org.

To follow the blog of the LOV summer interns, visit lightofthevillage.wordpress.com.

**"Our primary
goal is to reach
the kids with the
gospel of Christ."**

**Morgan Carnley
director, Camp Faith**



**Professional
SIGNS**



"We enjoyed our time working with Reliable Sign Services. Danny came and did a presentation to our church and answered all our questions. Our expectations were certainly met above and beyond what we anticipated. We are very excited how our new sign is going to enhance our ministry here at Tanner."

— Keith Turberville, associate pastor
First Baptist Church, Tanner

www.reliablesigns.com
1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

Expanding horizons

Bulletin board at FBC Citronelle prompts children to pray for missions, military

By Taylor Hamm
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

It's not a Wii or a TV, but leaders at First Baptist Church, Citronelle, say their church's children find it plenty interesting.

Each Sunday night, children and their leaders tackle topics from their Missions and Military board, an area where clippings from the International Mission Board's *Commission* magazine, information about local military personnel and writings from local Southern Baptist representatives are posted.

The children, age preschool to fifth grade, discuss the items posted on the board and pray for those serving overseas. If a story on the board interests them, they may take a few weeks to talk about it with their leaders and

learn more about it and how it can relate to them.

Rebecca Raney, one of the group's three rotating leaders, said the structure and lesson plan for each Sunday night is very flexible.

"It's a lot to take in — biblical times, missions concepts — and it doesn't deal with the Wii or Xbox, so when we find something that sparks their interest, we try and run with it and discuss it for some time," Raney said.

For example, one Sunday evening the group read a story from an issue of *The Alabama Baptist* detailing the life of a Muslim woman who had been falsely imprisoned in Southeast Asia. The story was posted on the missions board, and the children quickly became interested, asking more about her.

They learned that as this mother

"If we don't reach children now with the gospel ... we may lose our only opportunity."

**Pastor Elbert Charpie
FBC Citronelle**



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Raney

The Missions and Military board at FBC Citronelle includes clippings about international missions and local military personnel. On Sunday nights, children and their leaders tackle the topics.

of six sat in jail, a Christian worker captured the woman's interest by demonstrating kindness and love to all of the prisoners. The worker gave her a Bible, and she began to discover and seek God's guidance, hearing His voice, abandoning Islam and becoming a believer in Jesus.

Praying for others

The Sunday night group began praying for the imprisoned mother, seeking to find out more information about her and what may have happened to her. With this in mind, the group decided to write a letter to Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, to find out how

the woman was doing and if she was still in prison.

The group exists to expand the children's horizons, and the leaders are there both to answer questions and to leave the door open for future conversations.

Elbert Charpie, pastor of First, Citronelle, said it was extremely important for children to be aware of other countries, especially the spiritual condition of the people who live there.

"If we don't reach children now with the gospel and the importance of it, not just here, but throughout the world, we may lose our only opportunity," he said. ☩

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

PASTOR: Cottonton Baptist Church is seeking a pastor. Send resumés to: Cottonton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 35, Cottonton, AL 36851.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Southern Baptist church in north Shelby County seeks bivocational music minister for blended worship, adult choir, and praise team. Send resumé to: charleshoustondale@gmail.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: Sisters

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.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES: Northwood Hills Baptist Church in Northport is seeking a director of children's ministries. This part-time position involves nurturing the children (ages birth to 5th grade) in our church through teaching, outreach and planning age-appropriate activities/events. Submit resumés by Aug. 18 to: office@northwoodhillschurch.com, or call 205-339-3196.

BUSINESS

STEEPLES, ETC.: No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local: 205-699-9679. Ask for Terry Barnes, owner. Visit gallery at www.SteeplesEtc.com.

MOVING? LOCAL, STATEWIDE OR LONG DISTANCE: Coleman American/Allied Van Lines. Special rate and programs for Alabama Baptist ministers, staff and church members. Contact Gary Washington at 205-540-7470 or gary.washington@covan.com.

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR-

LIFTS: Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

CHURCH SIGNS: Reliable Signs offers design, fabrication, installation and service. All types of signs from electronic messaging signs to traditional. Statewide installation or will ship anywhere. Christian-owned. Many church references. www.reliablesigns.com 800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: Christian Values Green Technology Company seeks mature business professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands-on support and apprenticeship-style training. For complete information, call Paul at 888-710-6994.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

CHURCH BUILDING PROJECTS: Let Webb Builders help your church expand its facilities. Large or small projects. Your plans or use our custom-design building services. State licensed with 25+ years experience. Call Webb Builders Inc., 334-285-9302. Millbrook, Ala. Numerous church references available.

TRAVEL/VACATION

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACA-

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

GULF SHORES: 1/2/3 BR luxury beachfront condos and 4 BR beach resort house. Owner direct saves you \$\$\$\$. Call Chris at 1-800-713-6435, or cashley945@earthlink.net.

LOG CABIN: Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

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

FOR SALE

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION TREE: 19' tall, seven-tier, 43-voice, 150 degree. Structure and all accessories included. Assembly instructions and pictures included. Purchased from Celebration Specialties in 2002 for \$9,923. Price: \$2,500. Call 386-755-5553.

Want to know God?

Pastor Jay Wolf
First Baptist Church, Montgomery

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14-16).

A good friend of mine named Chad Cross recently suffered the experience of being bitten by a rattlesnake. He was turkey hunting and stepped over a fallen log into the strike-zone of a huge timber rattler. The snake struck with speed and power. Chad said he felt like a baseball bat struck his leg. He fell to the ground and dropped his shotgun. The snake slithered into the pine straw. Chad remembered he had a venom extraction kit in his turkey hunting vest. He prayed for God's peace to cover him and he successfully removed much of the deadly venom. He walked back to his truck and drove himself to the hospital. The medical team administered anti-venom and his life was spared.

God's Word gives us another vivid illustration of the deadly venom of sin that has been injected into the bloodstream of humankind. Jesus explained in John 3 that His offer of salvation is akin to what happened in Numbers 21. The children of Israel rebelled against God's leadership and encountered deadly serpents. The people were dying from snakebites. They cried out for help. God instructed Moses to create a symbol of their sin in the form of a brass serpent and put it in the middle of the camp. He then told the people to look at it with faith and they would live. God's message of how to be cured from the deadly snakebite was astonishingly simple: look and live.

On the cross, Jesus became sacrifice for our sin. Because of God's immeasurable love for His creation, our Savior invites us to find the cure for deadly poison of sin as we look to Jesus and live. Hear God's urgent call to admit that you are a snake-bitten sinner in need of Christ's cure. With child-like faith, ask God to inject the anti-venom of His love that cancels your sin debt and enables you to become part of His forever family. ☩

Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

Anti-Semitism on decline but still rampant online

NEW YORK — The Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) study of anti-Semitism in the U.S. shows a 14 percent decrease in incidents during 2012, the second consecutive year of a downward trend.

Overall the ADL counted 927 anti-Semitic incidents — including assaults, vandalism and harassment — down from the 1,080 incidents reported in 2011. Abraham H. Foxman, the ADL's national director, called the trend "encouraging."

"While these numbers only provide one snapshot of anti-Semitism in America, to the extent that they serve as a barometer the decline shows that we have made progress as a society in confronting anti-Jewish hatred," he said.

The ADL has conducted its annual survey since 1979. The recent decline in anti-Semitic incidents contrasts with findings in many European countries, where anti-Semitic incidents continue to rise. In France, for example, the Jewish Community Security Service recorded 614 anti-Semitic acts in 2012, compared to 389 in 2011 — a 58 percent jump.

Online expressions of anti-Semitism "are simply too numerous to track," according to the report, and are only counted "if they specifically target an individual."

"While we cannot point to any single explanation for the fluctuations from year to year, the declines of the past several years occur within the context of the continued proliferation of hatred online," said Barry Curtiss-Lusher, ADL national chair.

"This explosion of viral hate is impossible to quantify, but it may have led to a migration of sorts where the haters and bigots are more likely to take to the Internet to express themselves anonymously rather than acting out in a public setting," he said, adding that the potential audience for online hatred numbers in the millions, and the danger is that it can fuel real-world violence.

The report also describes increasing hostility against Jews on college campuses, with a total of 61 incidents reported in 2012, up from 22 incidents reported in 2011.

Ohio governor signs legislation to enact pro-life measures

CLEVELAND — The state of Ohio's two-year \$62 billion budget is much more than that to both sides of the abortion debate. When Gov. John Kasich signed the legislation June 30, he not only reduced the state income tax by \$2.6 billion but also enacted a series of pro-life measures. As reported by *The Columbus Dispatch*, the budget:

- ▶ Eliminates \$1.4 million in family planning funds for Planned Parenthood through a new priority system that places the abortion provider at the bottom of the list.

- ▶ Prohibits public hospitals from having transfer agreements for patients with abortion clinics.

- ▶ Mandates an abortion doctor perform an ultrasound and to inform a woman seeking an abortion if he finds a heartbeat for the unborn child.

- ▶ Provides funding for pregnancy help centers, which provide alternatives to abortion, as well as material support, for women considering abortion.

Pro-life advocates applauded inclusion of the pro-life measures in the budget bill.

The law could force many of Ohio's 12 abortion clinics to shut down, according to the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws Pro-choice Ohio.



Photos by Pat Sanders

(LEFT) EMERGING LEADERS — Twenty young women from across the state gather at the 11th annual Emerging Leaders Forum. (RIGHT) NEW OFFICERS — Sonja Adams (left), of Heflin, recording secretary; Laurelle Stoudenmire, of Thomasville, president; and Michelle Wise (not pictured), of Mobile, vice president.

State WMU leaders celebrate how 'God is at work here in Alabama'

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As we're moving forward, we need to be watching, waiting and ready to reply to whatever God would have us do, anticipating what God's moving among our hearts might be."

This was the encouragement Laurelle Stoudenmire, the newly elected president of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), gave the approximately 350 church and associational women's leaders present at Alabama WMU's annual leadership conference.

Stoudenmire is WMU director for Thomasville Baptist Church and a former International Mission Board missionary.

The conference, held July 19–20 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, was based on the theme "iLIVE," drawn from Acts 17:28a, "For in Him we live and move and have our being."

Lucretia Mobbs, a former Alabama WMU Missions & Ministry consultant who led the general-session Bible study, encouraged

participants to "slow down your frantic activity and claim the joy of the Lord in every present moment."

Mobbs is the volunteer and church partnership coordinator for The Next Door, a Nashville-based ministry for women leaving incarceration.

Women should be ready and available for opportunities, she said. "Pour out your life for God and your neighbor, then trust the Lord for outcomes."

Specialized training

The conference included specialized instructional workshops for missions leaders as well as general interest sessions on topics such as connecting students to missions, planning a children's event, influencing the next generation of international leaders and ways to be involved in Project HELP: Human Exploitation.

A special track for the weekend was the Emerging Leaders Forum, made up of 20 teenage girls in grades 9–12 who were invited to attend because they have demonstrated exceptional leadership ability in their home churches and

associations. During the biennial meeting, four young women gave testimonies about how the ministries of Alabama WMU had impacted their faith development.

They are part of WMU's vision for the future, said outgoing president Becky Luther. "As I look out here today, I know that we have a bright future because I see all the young ladies out there who are now becoming leaders, who are stepping forward, so that's the future, the young people stepping forward to keep missions alive with Alabama WMU," she said.

Executive director Candace McIntosh mentioned the foundation Alabama is building on — the organization will celebrate its 125th anniversary next year.

"For 125 years, we have united for the cause of Christ to carry out the Great Commission," McIntosh said. "God is at work here in Alabama. He delights in using His servants to minister to those who find themselves in need."

Other officers elected were Michelle Wise, of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, as vice president; and Sonja Adams, of Heflin Baptist Church, as recording secretary. ☞

IMB receives accreditation for financial integrity

The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) announced in late July the accreditation of the International Mission Board (IMB), the Richmond, Va.-based global missions arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest evangelical denomination.

In receiving accreditation from ECFA (www.ecfa.org), the IMB has submitted its financial records to the highest level of scrutiny and met all criteria to receive the ECFA seal of financial integrity.

"With 1.7 billion people worldwide who have little or no access to the gospel, it is a privilege for ECFA to accredit IMB, one of the leading ministries making disciples of all people to fulfill the Great Commission," said

Dan Busby, ECFA president.

IMB President Tom Elliff said, "The IMB has always been conscious of its financial responsibility to Southern Baptists, who sacrifice in order to help take the saving message of Jesus Christ to those who haven't heard. We are pleased to add ECFA accreditation as continued assurance to our constituents that we consistently conform to the highest standards of accountability."

Currently funding about 4,900 field personnel around the world, the IMB and its overseas partners saw more than 266,000 baptisms in the most recent reporting year and more than 24,000 new churches started.

The IMB budget for 2013 is \$323.8 million, including a na-

tional goal of \$175 million in the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Ministries include evangelism, discipleship, church planting and disaster relief.

'Give with confidence'

The IMB passed all of ECFA's evaluation according to the ECFA Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship, including financial accountability, transparency, sound board governance and ethical fundraising.

"As International Mission Board recognizes that over 6,000 people groups still live with little or no access to the gospel, donors to its ministries may give with confidence of the highest financial integrity," Busby said.

(ECFA)

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

Email your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org;
fax it to 205-870-8957 or call 1-800-803-5201. Church
announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 11

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

CAN I KEEP ON GOING? Ecclesiastes 7:11-14, 15-18; 8:10-17

What should I do now? This is one of those FAQs (frequently asked questions) that we cry out in frustration. Ask the wrong person, and you may end up in a worse predicament than you started. Make a rash decision, and the hole you are digging may become deeper. Pretend that you have all the answers, and you will soon see that you do not. Can you keep going? Of course, but listen to godly counsel.

Accept Godly Wisdom (7:11-14)

The Hebrew Psalter begins with lyrics extolling the benefit of heeding God's law and ignoring godless counsel. Throughout the Proverbs, Solomon exhorts his son to listen to the wisdom of father and mother as well as to gather God-fearing advisers around him. In the passage at hand, wisdom is compared to an inheritance and a protector of life.

We may not understand all that God is doing, but we must receive wisdom given from Him. Both joys and adversities accompany the believer, yet God can be trusted through it all. Bible students know the answer to the question: "Who can straighten out what He has made crooked?" God will make the crooked straight (or smooth the uneven ground, Isa. 40:4).

Avoid Foolish Extremes (7:15-18)

One must be careful here. Is Qohelet (the Teacher) advocating moderation to the exclusion of righteous living? Is he suggesting that believers should be neither too bad nor too good? After all, the text tells us not to be overly wise (7:16). He warns against the twin extremes of foolishness and wickedness (7:17). It seems that he also prepares his readers for a difficult lesson in faith: righteous people will suffer and wicked people will enjoy life. Fearing God at all times is the best approach to our situations.

Believers must trust God regardless of circumstances. God does not guaran-

tee that following Jesus will be pain-free, debt-free, divorce-free or cancer-free. Run the race God has for you, and trust Him when the path gets rough, when you lose your footing and when darkness closes in. Don't foolishly forsake Him, believing He has abandoned you. Keep in mind that your reward is worth waiting for (see Rom. 8:18).

Know God Is in Control (8:10-17)

An execution is a deterrent to a capital offense. A sentence lived in a jail cell does not dissuade criminals. The Teacher expresses frustration with the folly of innumerable warnings with no consequences, threats with no punishment. Why should the wicked forsake his ways if there is nothing discouraging him from similar activity in the future?

In 1993, an American teenager named Michael Peter Fay was arrested in Singapore for vandalism after joining other boys in defacing cars with spray paint. His sentence? He was beaten with four strokes from a rattan rod. Although there were international outcries regarding the cruelty of his consequences, Fay learned his lesson.

Although humanity may be soft on crime, God is not. What is the sentence for the crime of disobeying God? Death. Revisit Genesis 2 and you will discover that ignoring God's diet ended with a death sentence. It was because sin requires death that Jesus died for sinners.

Okay. So if God is hard on crime why are there so many evil people doing evil deeds all over the world? When we observe this universe that God created, we discover the law of the harvest. We will reap what we plant — more and later — but the same kind. Like in our gardens or grain fields, it takes time for that seed to die and for that little plant to mature and bear fruit.

We have already discovered in Ecclesiastes 3 that God's timing is perfect. He makes everything beautiful in His time. Another revelation is that God does not tell us everything. God is in control, and we must trust Him.

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

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED AND RAISED Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:17-19

Crucified Savior (Mark 15:33-39)

Writing to souls burdened with temptation, the author of Hebrews urges his readers to look to the example of Jesus for encouragement: "Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Later he will add, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet He did not sin" (Heb. 4:15). While Hebrews proclaims that in Jesus we find the culmination of God's revelation to humanity, the book also encourages us to ponder the humanity of Jesus.

Nowhere is the humanity of Jesus more evident than in the Gospel of Mark. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus shares openly His dread of the suffering He must endure. As the hour of His suffering approaches, we find what is perhaps the most touching scene in the Gospels. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus tells His disciples, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," and He asks them to pray for Him. Falling to the ground a little distance away, overcome with grief and fear, we hear such human words, "Abba, everything is possible for You; take this cup from Me." Even on the cross, Jesus' words in Mark show us His humanity. Recalling the words of Psalm 22, Jesus says in Mark only, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" and with a loud cry He breathes His last.

Living Lord (Mark 16:1-7)

The earthly ministry of Jesus was set against a background of tremendous factionalism in early Judaism. The twin perils of persecution and assimilation forced the religious leaders of the day to define more clearly the boundaries of Jewish identity.

This process of self-definition often led to one group's accusing another of defining Judaism incorrectly, of failing to uphold properly the essentials of following God. In the parlance of the day, groups tended to think

of themselves as "righteous;" those who disagreed with them were branded "sinners." The behavior of those called "sinners" would hardly strike us as rank lawlessness or immorality. More often, disagreements focused on ritual matters rather than moral failings. But this intense focus on ritual matters left many regular Jews on the outside looking in. Those who could not keep pace with the scrupulous requirements espoused by some groups found themselves counted among the "sinners."

While Jesus is described by the Gospel writers as being quite scrupulous in His own observance of the Law, He reacted strongly against marginalizing the common people as "sinners." In a move that was bound to create tension with those who placed such a high priority on strict ritual purity, Jesus regularly went to the houses of "sinners" and ate meals with them. Though without sin Himself, Jesus made it a point to reach out to "sinners."

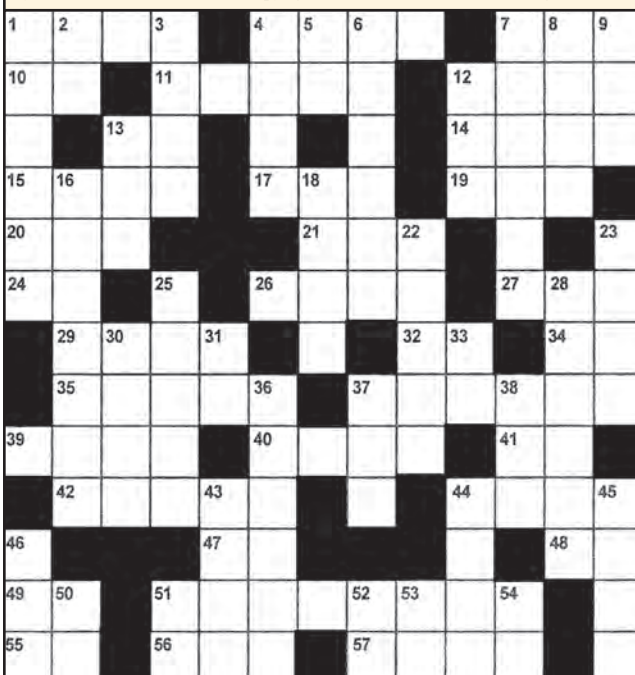
The death Jesus died was equally as scandalizing as the life that He lived. To die on a cross was to be counted as cursed by God (Deut. 21:23). Were the story of Jesus to end with His death on the cross, one might rightly look at His death as a sign that His life had run counter to God's designs. Death on a cross would signify that God had not approved of this life spent among "sinners." It is here, though, that Jesus' resurrection moves so powerfully to the fore. Through the resurrection, the Father places His stamp of approval on the life and death of the Son. The Son lived a life among sinners and died a sinner's death. Through the resurrection, the Father sees Jesus' outreach to sinners and proclaims, "Well done."

Resurrection Faith (1 Cor. 15:17-19)

Because it represents the Father's blessing on Jesus' ministry to sinners, the resurrection remains a powerful symbol of hope for those to whom Jesus reaches out today. The Father looked approvingly on His Son's life and death, and we who follow the Son can know with confidence that we will receive the Father's approval as well. In the Son, we will also taste the renewal of life in the resurrection and hear the words, "Well done."

Christian Crossword

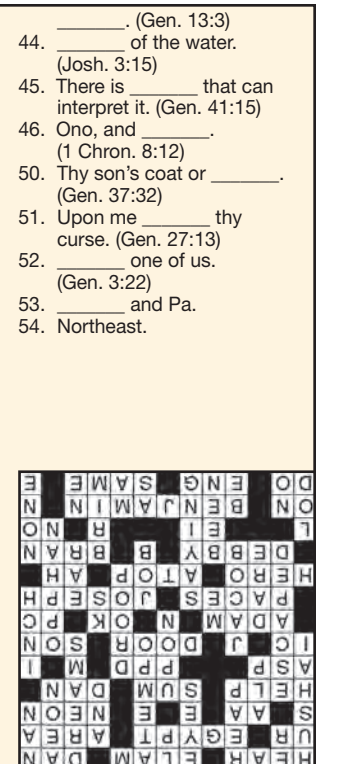
By Mrs. Chester Vance Jr. Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- _____ I pray you. (Gen. 37:6)
- King of _____, and Tidal. (Gen. 14:1)
- _____ shall judge. (Gen. 49:16)
- _____ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 15:7)
- The king of _____. (Gen. 40:5)
- Plane surface having bounds.
- Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)
- _____ light.
- Who shall _____ thee. (Gen. 49:25)
- A _____ of money. (Ex. 21:30)
- _____, and Naphtali. (Ex. 1:4)
- The hole of the _____. (Isa. 11:8)
- Prepaid. (abbr.)
- Intensive care.
- _____ of the house. (Gen. 43:19)
- My _____ shall not go down. (Gen. 42:38)
- Called their name _____. (Gen. 5:2)
- Oklahoma. (abbr.)
- Red Cross. (abbr.)

- Gone six _____. (2 Sam. 6:13)
- _____ wept. (Gen. 50:17)
- Chief male character in story.
- On top of.
- _____ sinful nation. (Isa. 1:4)
- Nickname of Deborah.
- Skin or husk of grain.
- Roman numeral for fifty.
- East Indies. (abbr.)
- There was _____ water in it. (Gen. 37:24)
- Potiphar, priest of _____. (Gen. 41:45)
- But _____ Joseph's brother. (Gen. 42:4)
- What he sayeth to you, _____. (Gen. 41:55)
- English. (abbr.)
- These _____ words. (Gen. 44:6)
- Music term.
- What will become of his _____. (Gen. 37:20)
- Thousands and thousands of years. (English spelling.)
- Girl's name.
- _____ it shall come to pass. (1 Sam. 2:36)
- Swiss mountain.
- The servant which is _____ from his master. (Deut. 23:15)
- Put sackcloth _____ his loins. (Gen. 37:34)
- Sink or drop down.
- Measure equal to 1/12 of a foot.
- Joseph's father. (Gen. 46:19)
- Child that has lost his parents.
- _____ stir him up. (Job 41:10)
- Dealt ye so ill with _____. (Gen. 43:6)
- Kansas.
- Judah spake unto him, _____ ... (Gen. 43:3)
- Patience of _____. (James 5:11)
- Give _____ to his commandments. (Ex. 15:26)
- Place where his tent had



“I’ve heard from people who have been reminded that God is so much bigger than we ever give Him credit for and He is in control even when we don’t realize it.”

Jason Lovins
worship leader

Hope & healing

Worship leader reminds audiences of God’s promise to never forsake us

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As Jason Lovins leads worship for events around the country, he reminds audiences that every life has meaning, purpose and value.

When Lovins’ mother was only 15 years old, she was raped and became pregnant. However, because of the support and encouragement she received during this crucial time, she decided not to have an abortion.

Even though she was a young mother, she realized the importance of continuing her education, as well as providing for her son’s physical and spiritual needs.

Despite Lovins not having a connection to his earthly father, his mother and grandmother made it very clear to him at a young age that his heavenly Father loved him more than he could ever know.

Lovins grew up attending First Baptist Church, Kenova, W.Va., and felt the Lord calling him to pursue music while in college.

Today Lovins maintains a busy schedule leading worship for church services, revivals, conferences and youth camps such as LifeWay’s Centrifuge. He also has performed at Billy Graham events and wrote the song “Journey” for a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association TV Special.



As Lovins performs at events around the country, he shares his testimony in hopes of encouraging audiences to choose life. His newest album, “Promises,” is designed to help listeners turn their eyes toward Jesus.

“When I’m leading worship, I just want to be real with audiences,” Lovins said. “As a kid, I remember making up stories that my dad lived in California or someplace. I didn’t want people to feel sorry for me when they found out that my mom had been raped.”

“A life-changing moment came when we were leading worship at a summer camp and I met a 16-year-old girl who had an 8-month-old baby. I felt led to talk to her and found out that she had been raped. I knew that I needed to share my story with her and let her know that there was someone else in this world who has been through exactly what she has been through and has made it. During our conversation, I realized how much she needed that encouragement. That really put things into perspective for me.”

Through the years, Lovins has received countless emails and letters from people who have been inspired to choose life after hearing his testimony.

“I’ve heard from people who have been reminded that God is so much bigger than we ever give Him credit for and He is in control even when we don’t realize it,” Lovins said.

“I’ve heard from people who have been reminded that God is so much bigger than we ever give Him credit for and He is in control even when we don’t realize it,” Lovins said.



Jason Lovins

Photo courtesy of Bozeman Media

“One night after a concert, a lady came up to me and simply said, ‘Thank you.’ I found out later that the woman had been struggling for a long time and considering not keeping her baby.”

Changing hearts

“The Lord has been able to use my story to change the hearts of many people who were wondering if they could go through with an abortion.”

“After another concert, a lady came up and said, ‘I wasn’t planning to come to-night because I haven’t been to church in a

few years. I’ve been very mad at God ever since my son committed suicide. That’s when I walked away from the Lord. I didn’t know how to deal with it. My friend talked me into coming to your concert. I believe it was to hear your story and realize that tragedy does happen, but the Lord is still working in our lives and He will not forsake us.’ This lady just needed to see an example of someone who had been faithful even in the midst of terrible times. It’s been incredible to hear one testimony after another about how God’s love has brought hope and healing to each situation.”

“The Lord has been able to use my story to change the hearts of many people who were wondering if they could go through with an abortion.”

Jason Lovins
worship leader

*“I try to live a life that
is acceptable to God.”*

Ralph Henriquez Jr.
Long Island Ducks

Motivated by Scripture



Ralph Henriquez Jr. (left)

Photo by Charlie Barbeisch/Long Island Ducks

Long Island Ducks' catcher Henriquez leans 'on God for everything'

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Prayers go up and blessings come down. That mantra for Ralph Henriquez Jr. parallels his eight-year career in professional baseball. He's been up — as far as Tacoma, the Seattle Mariners' AAA affiliate in the Pacific Coast League — and been down — to Greeneville, Tenn., the Houston Astros' rookie team in the Appalachian League.

He's played for teams in Class A, Class A-Advanced and with the Jackson Generals, Seattle's AA Southern League team.

Through it all, Henriquez has “leaned on God for everything.”

“You name it,” said Henriquez, now a catcher for the Long Island Ducks, an independent Atlantic League of Professional Baseball team he signed with before the 2013 season.

“There is not a day that goes by that I don't open a Bible or don't say a prayer. I lean on God to get by every single day. I try to learn about the good Lord and get closer to God.”

Drafted in the second round out of Key West High School in 2005 by the Astros, Henriquez, 26, has played for the New York Mets organization along with Seattle. In 2012 Henriquez, a switch hitter, had three home runs, nine doubles and 19 RBIs in 50 games with Tacoma and Jackson.

He spent most of the 2011 season in Tacoma learning from former major leaguers.

“Guys are more experienced,” he said. “Guys are trying to get back. They know how to play.”

Part of God's plan

While Henriquez was discouraged when his assignment sent him from AAA to AA, he said it was all part of God's plan.

“Everything happens for a reason, and you just got to know that His plan is the best plan,” he said. “I feel like God's ways are better than the world's ways.”

The more Henriquez saturated himself in his faith, the more he wanted to separate himself from the world.

“I realized the life I wanted to live,” he said. “I try

to live a life that is acceptable to God. I feel like every day is a challenge, especially in this environment. I feel like you get tested, and the devil tries to tempt you with something else. That's the part that you've got to separate yourself, be strong and have faith. With everything there are sacrifices. That is part of separating too. You can't do what everybody is doing.”

He abstains from alcohol and is motivated by Scripture, including John 3:16 and Philippians 4:13.

New perspective

“Without God in your life, it is hard,” Henriquez said. “Once you come to understand what the Bible is about and how it says to go about things, it changes life in a whole new perspective. It makes you realize the good, the bad and the ugly. The more faith I have, the more I trust in Him and easier things will be.”

As he discusses faith with teammates, former Generals teammate Nate Tenbrink, a third baseman for Tacoma, notices Henriquez's walk matches his talk.

“He is really into his faith,” Tenbrink said. “That is a good quality to have. He trusts all his ability to God, and I think a lot of us do. He really rubs off on a bunch of us in this clubhouse.”

Tim Tebow is a spiritual role model for Henriquez, who has seen the way Tebow, a former University of Florida quarterback and now a New England Patriots quarterback, helps people and changes lives.

On Sundays Henriquez attends church and baseball chapel. He was a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Key West and heard athletes' testimonies of what helped them to become grounded in their faith.

Henriquez was led to Christ by his father, Ralph Henriquez Sr., and mother, Denise Henriquez. Henriquez Sr., who coached Henriquez Jr. in high school, also coached with the Atlanta Braves and Mets and played for the Cleveland Indians. Ralfael Henriquez, the late grandfather of Henriquez Jr., was a catcher for the Indians.

Being a catcher, Henriquez Jr. has to handle 13 pitchers.

“They all have to trust you when you put down the right signs and run a game,” he said.

Tenbrink said, “Baseball is confidence. Every time he gets that opportunity to play, he plays to his full potential. He is a team player. He is a leader, on the field and in the clubhouse. Everybody likes being around him.”

Henriquez, who is most proud of his high-round draft selection, said he tries to learn something new and get better every day.

As is the case with so many players who have gone through the ups and downs of the minor leagues, Henriquez's goal is to reach the majors. God is his inspiration to get there.

“I love God,” he said. “All the glory goes to Him, and the blessings are coming from Him. Being a Christian sets everything. It leads you. Having faith is knowing that God can provide. Everything is possible with God. Nothing is impossible with Him. I try to keep going every day and know the opportunity will come.” ☞

*“There is not a day that
goes by that I don't
open a Bible or don't
say a prayer. I lean on
God to get by every
single day. I try to learn
about the good Lord
and get closer to God.”*

Ralph Henriquez Jr.
Long Island Ducks