

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Sept. 19, 2013
Vol. 178, No. 37

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Momentum shift

Birmingham abortion clinic closes as part of national trend, leaves 5 clinics in state

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The closing of a Birmingham abortion clinic in August is part of a national trend that has seen more than 40 abortion clinics close in 2013.

Jefferson County Circuit Judge Joseph Boothaker ruled Aug. 8 that the New Woman All Women clinic, located at 1001 17th St. South in Birmingham, did not meet the criteria of a physician's office and therefore needed a state license to operate as an abortion clinic.

Current Alabama law requires licensure for any clinic that performs 30 or more abortion procedures during any two months of a calendar year or for a facility that advertises abortion services through any public means. The clinic's physician, Dr. Bruce Norman, argued that he performed less than 30 abortion procedures monthly. However the court ruled that by both standards, the New Woman All Women clinic met the definition of an abortion or reproductive health center.

More closures possible

The closing of the Birmingham clinic brings the number of abortion clinics left in the state to five, with facilities in Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, Tuscaloosa and Huntsville. However, legislation signed by Gov. Robert Bentley in April could bring the closure of additional clinics in the state, pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed in federal court.

Alabama lawmakers passed the

"Women's Health and Safety Act" April 2 and Bentley signed the legislation April 9. The bill requires medication disclosures and sets stricter building requirements for abortion clinics, including wider halls and doors and better fire suppression systems.

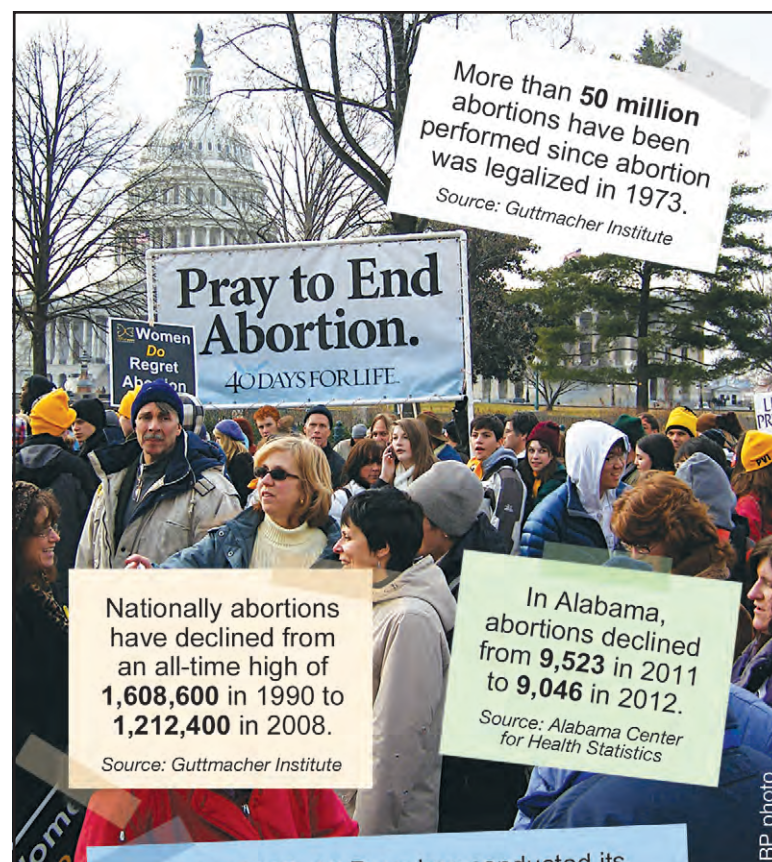
Clear pattern

The bill also requires abortion clinics in Alabama to employ a doctor with admitting privileges at a local hospital. This provision has been suspended temporarily by U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson in response to a lawsuit filed by Planned Parenthood and a Montgomery clinic.

According to the Alabama Center for Health Statistics, 9,046 abortions were performed in Alabama in 2012, down from 9,523 abortions in 2011. The drop in the number of abortions performed, coupled with the unprecedented rate of clinic closings, is encouraging news for pro-lifers throughout the United States.

This year, 42 clinics that provided surgical abortions have shut their doors, and two that offered chemical abortions by drugs also have closed, according to Operation Rescue, which monitors closings and health and safety violations by clinics nationwide. That number far surpasses the 25 surgical clinics shut down in 2012 and the 30 in 2011, by Operation Rescue's count. While others estimate a smaller number of closings, the pattern is clear.

(See 'Life-affirming,' page 10)



Nationally abortions have declined from an all-time high of 1,608,600 in 1990 to 1,212,400 in 2008.

Source: Guttmacher Institute

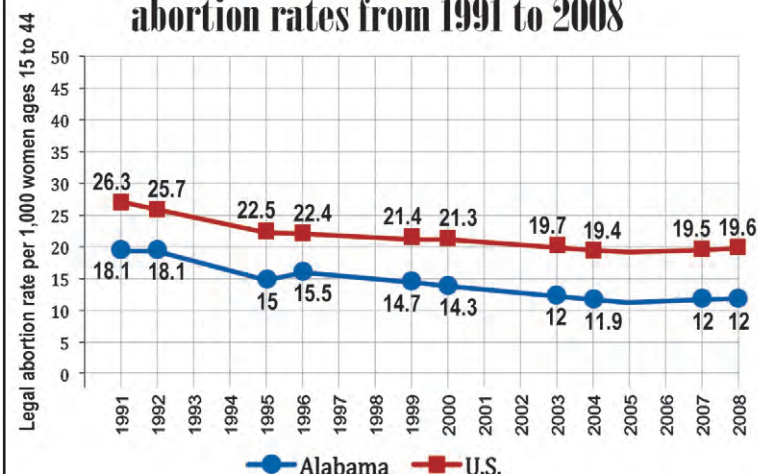
In Alabama, abortions declined from 9,523 in 2011 to 9,046 in 2012.

Source: Alabama Center for Health Statistics

Since 2007, 40 Days has conducted its semi-annual campaigns of peaceful prayer vigils outside abortion clinics in more than 500 cities nationally and internationally. More than 575,000 people have participated, and 40 Days reports 39 clinics have closed permanently after their campaigns.

Source: BP

U.S. and Alabama abortion rates from 1991 to 2008



Abortion rates source: Guttmacher Institute

Coming in October

A series on the
Cooperative Program
in action in Alabama



COMMENT

Chronos Time or Kairos Time?

When you go to work each day, do you view the time spent there as *chronos* time or *kairos* time? When you keep the grandchildren for three days while their parents have a special time together, is that *chronos* time or *kairos* time for you? On Sunday morning when you go to church is the time in the service *chronos* time or *kairos* time?

The Greeks used different words to describe different approaches to time. When the reference was to the length of time spent in a place or activity, the word used was *chronos*. It is the root of the word chronology. Basically the word marks time. It has a beginning point and an ending point and says nothing about the quality of the place or experience.

A *chronos* time approach, for example, views work as time spent — clock in and clock out. The emphasis is on the duration between the starting point and the ending point. Likewise *chronos* time emphasizes the duration between the moment the grandchildren are dropped off and the moment the parents walk through the door to pick them up. The focus is on the length of time spent.

Similarly with a church service *chronos* time turns what is supposed to be a worship service into an endurance event. One has to endure the moments between the first musical notes signaling the beginning of the service and the final amen that ends the benediction.

Kairos time ignores the length of the activity and focuses instead on the quality of the experience. Biblical scholars often say *kairos* time is “pregnant with possibilities.”

For example, at work *kairos* time emphasizes the possibility of accomplishment, the possibility of personal growth or the possibility of helping others. Instead of counting the hours, minutes and seconds the grandchildren are one’s responsibility, *kairos* time points to the possibility of



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

new insights into the personalities of the grandchildren, the possibility of a special experience that will become a favorite family memory or the possibility of helping the parents nurture their relationship as husband and wife.

A *kairos* approach to time recognizes the possibility of being encouraged by fellow believers when one gathers for worship, the possibility of God’s Holy Spirit working in one’s life as a result of worship or the possibility of new insights into the nature of God and one’s relationship to Him.

A decisive point in time

Again *chronos* time focuses on duration. *Kairos* time emphasizes possibilities.

When Jesus announced in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe the gospel,” He used the word *kairos* for time. Those who heard Him and those who read Mark’s account understood Jesus was talking about the possibilities of the moment. The promise of God that a Savior would come was fulfilled. It was a decisive point in time. Imagine the possibilities as grace replaced law and the long-heralded kingdom of God was ushered in through the person of Jesus.

Mark makes no reference to a universal clock ticking enough times to reach a certain date. He

is not worried about the duration between the first promise of a Savior and the Blessed One’s appearance. Instead Mark points readers toward a *kairos* moment.

The apostle Paul picks up the same theme when he writes in Ephesians 1:10 about “when the times will have reached their fulfillment.” Again it is *kairos* that is used for time signifying the possibilities of that moment when God unites all things in heaven and earth together through Jesus Christ.

Not only is *kairos* used to describe defining moments in time when God acts, the word is used to direct believers in how to live their lives. Colossians 4:5 instructs believers to “redeem the time” (KJV).

Again the word for time is *kairos*, not *chronos*. The imagery behind the word is to buy back the moments from evil so the moments can be filled with meaning. The NIV says “make the most of every opportunity.” Why? Because existence is not enough. The apostle’s direction is to seize each opportunity to see what special outcome God might have in store.

Because *kairos* refers to an indefinite period of time, it can refer to seasons of life as well as to individual moments of life. When it does, the apostle Paul’s instructions are still the same — make the most of every opportunity.

Sometimes Christians feel guilty when changing circumstances necessitate adjustments to one’s service for the Lord. The temptation is to emphasize *chronos* time. “I have always done ...” one might say. The inference is that one wants to continue doing whatever it may be until some point in the future. The emphasis is on duration rather than possibility. It is chronology rather than quality.

To be sure, persistence is a Christian value, but so is discernment.

The principle of redeeming the time or making the most of every opportunity begins with recognizing the changing circumstances. It could be changing seasons of life. It could be the changing seasons of volunteer service. It could be changes in work or family responsibilities.

The biblical principle is to make the most of the new circumstances; to redeem the time in order to see what special things God wants to do at that season of one’s life. Embracing change can be the first step to a *kairos* experience.

Chronos time counts the number of times the clock ticks between the starting point and ending point of an event. *Kairos* time values life as “just one thing after another” because that approach to time sees every moment, every experience, every opportunity as “pregnant with possibilities” to see what special thing God wants to do.

May God help each of us not to settle for mere existence but always look for God’s special surprise in each day.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

EMBEZZLEMENT

In regards to your story “Embezzlement not uncommon, but proactive steps can help prevent” on the front page of *The Alabama Baptist* on Sept. 5, I am writing to represent those honest, dependable and responsible treasurers/financial secretaries in Alabama Baptist churches. To be placed in a position to handle the finances of a congregation of people is a great honor and one that should not be taken lightly. This position requires confidentiality and integrity. The congregation should be able to trust the person they have placed in that position, referring to the article’s reference to “the per-

son who embezzled was someone the church trusted.” It is a great tragedy that these things occur but the actions of some are not the actions of all.

Debra Jones
Alabama

STEWARDSHIP

How often do we stop and consider the judgment used in managing the funds of our churches? Recently I watched an associate minister of one the larger churches on TV boasting about his church having just completed a \$130 million remodeling and renovation of their church facilities. \$130,000,000.00! How frequently do

we ponder the judgment and management when we see palatial church complexes costing in the millions yet are only utilized on the average less than 12 hours weekly? This while we have scores of needy families, homeless, the elderly, children at risk, even the unemployed within walking distance of our cozy buildings? Are we being good stewards of God’s money? How do you think Jesus would react to our behavior today?

James W. Anderson
Talladega, Ala.





"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye 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.

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RNS photo

Lawrence J. Pijaux Jr. (center) president and CEO of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, holds the Congressional Gold Medal as it is presented posthumously Sept. 10 to the four girls killed in the 1963 bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Part of history

Sixteenth Street Baptist bombing recalled with donation, medal

They were among the youngest martyrs of the civil rights movement, four young black girls — three 14-year-olds and one 11-year-old — whose deaths in a church basement horrified a nation already torn apart by segregation.

In mid-September, 50 years after the Ku Klux Klan bombing at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, shook hopes for a colorblind country, the four girls are getting their due.

Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair were posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on Sept. 10, a day after a piece of shattered stained glass from the church was donated to the Smithsonian.

"This was just a little over two weeks after the March on Washington, which had generated so much optimism for progress of civil rights," recalled Randall Jimerson, who was 14 when his white minister father scooped up the shards of glass from outside the bombed Birmingham church Sept. 15, 1963.

"And now for this event to take place, it just was shattering for us to hear about."

Reconciliation and healing

Jimerson and his siblings made the donation to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which is scheduled to open in 2015. The museum's deputy director, Kinshasha Holman Conwill, said the donation fits the museum's mission of reconciliation and healing.

"This is an extraordinary object in and of itself, commemorating one of the most searing and profoundly shocking moments in our country's history," she said.

On Sept. 10, U.S. House Speaker John A. Boehner led the congressional ceremony at which the medal was bestowed. Some 300 people, including family members of the bombing victims, attended the ceremony. The medal will be kept at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute across the street from the Baptist church.

"These perpetrators of really what was the worst day in the history of Birmingham ... they meant evil," said U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus, R-Alabama. "They were filled with hate. But God took those actions and took that tragedy and turned it into something still tragic, still heartbreaking but resulting in a civil rights movement and a movement for good, for peace, for love."

President Obama's speech at the 2012 groundbreaking for the museum prompted Jimerson, director of archives and records management at Western Washington University in Bellingham, to make the donation of the broken stained glass.

For most of the past five decades, the family kept the rosette — with bluish-green and cream tones — and its twisted pieces of lead in the family's dining room hutch as they moved from state to state.

He said his jaw dropped when Obama specifically cited "the shards of glass" from the Birmingham church as objects his daughters

"But God took those actions and took that tragedy and turned it into something still tragic, still heartbreaking but resulting in a civil rights movement and a movement for good, for peace, for love."

U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus
Alabama congressman

should see in the forthcoming museum.

"That's us," he thought. "That's what we have."

His father, Norman Jimerson, an American Baptist minister who became executive director of the Alabama Council on Human Relations, died in 1995. On the day of the bombing, he and his wife visited the church when they could find no other white ministers to join them.

"She would show this glass and say the twisted glass here is the symbol of twisted minds that would hate people so much to cause such a tragedy," said Jimerson, recalling the activism of his mother, Melva Brooks Jimerson.

His sister, Ann Jimerson, who has created a website about children who lived in Birmingham in 1963, said the memento's move to the museum will honor the four girls who died as well as two black boys who were killed in the aftermath of the bombings.

"It was a hard decision for our family to let go of the glass," she said, shortly before she blew a kiss to it as Smithsonian officials packed it up for safe keeping. "I have at least one good friend who kept saying to me, 'That glass does not belong to you and the Jimerson family — it belongs to the nation.' ... It will have a much broader audience here." (RNS)



RNS photo

Randall Jimerson and his family donate a stained glass rosette and twisted metal from the 1963 church bombing to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

ARTS & Worship

From live painting to black lights to dance, churches use visuals to tell gospel story

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Devin Myrick is passionate about art, but until recently the Montgomery teen never thought about her gift in terms of worship. That changed last fall when she needed a talent to perform in the Distinguished Young Women scholarship program.

Myrick, a member of Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, remembered an artist she had seen at a youth conference several years ago and decided that she could do a similar program as her talent. She practiced her drawing, a representation of Jesus and the cross, and choreographed her strokes to a carefully selected song. When Keith Pate, minister of music at Eastern Hills Baptist, saw Myrick's performance, he immediately wanted the church to see it.

"It was very effective," Pate said. "As you're watching, you don't realize what she's doing because she is painting the image upside down. But when she flips it over, and you see the profile of Christ and the cross, it's very powerful."

Though the predominant art form used in Alabama Baptist churches is music, the use of visual arts in worship has gained popularity in recent years, according to Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Hibbs has seen individuals create sketches, paintings and clay sculptures during worship, usually accompanied by music that complements the theme of the art. He also has seen groups use interpretive movement, black light theatre, dowel rods, mime, classical dance and even Celtic dance in worship services, especially during Christmas and Easter programs.

Though each church determines what activities and talents will be used in worship, Hibbs sees visual arts as a way to complement and enhance the spoken word in order to

reach the lost in both church and non-church venues.

"It's all about telling the gospel story. If that method of expression is effective in communicating the gospel story, it ought to be utilized," Hibbs said.

Sally Smith agrees. She and her husband Sharber, pastor of San Souci Baptist Church, Coden, in Mobile Baptist Association, have been using creative arts in their ministry for almost 40 years. Though they incorporate character portrayals, illusions, ventriloquism and chalk art into their presentations, Smith said their message is not just for children.

"People remember 80 percent of what they see and 20 percent of what they hear, so it is important that people of all ages see the gospel presented," Smith noted.

Smith said one key to presenting the gospel effectively using visuals is being sensitive to what is appropriate for a particular service or situation. Another key is being open to where God is leading.

"A lot of people want to stick with something traditional, but if God has given you a talent to use to present the gospel, He will give you the ability to use it for His glory," Smith said.

Pate has found that incorporating multiple creative avenues, including interpretive song drama, scripted skits and readers' theatre, allows greater participation in worship, especially for students.

"Banners, sign language, dance, black light, visual art — all those forms allow more people to share the gifts God has given them individually to express praise and worship and tell a story," Pate said.

Because creative arts engage multiple senses,

audiences remember more of the message as well, Pate said.

"As opposed to a sermon, you have a message encapsulated in a very tight, two to three minute vignette that packs a lot of punch because it's so poignant and brings the message to life," he said.

Generating art is an especially effective way to involve children in worship as well, according to John Woods, minister of worship at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Bir-



Photo courtesy of Devin Myrick

Devin Myrick, a member of Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, uses the gift of art to present the gospel.

mingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association. Having children illustrate a particular song or passage, for example, and then projecting their drawings on a screen during worship is an easy and effective way to use their art.

In preparation for a sermon series or seasonal emphasis like Advent, artists of all ages might be invited to create artwork on the topic that can be exhibited during the emphasis. When displayed well with good lighting, a gallery-like display can help worshippers prepare their hearts, Woods said.

Regardless of the creative element, intentional planning is important because the goal is for worshippers to connect the visual images to the biblical message, Woods said. For better or worse, he said, our society has moved toward images, and in order to reach the lost, churches must engage with those who come to worship.

"We've moved from a Gutenberg generation to a Google generation, from printed word on paper being the primary support

for congregational worship toward images," Woods said. "As a worship leader, I want to give people multiple ways to engage with God in the service."

Those in the pews are looking for the same thing, said Steve Halla, assistant professor of art at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. The term he often hears from his students is "holistic."

Engaging your senses

"When they worship in a traditional setting, they think, 'I sing and use my voice, I listen and use my ears. But what about my other senses that aren't being engaged?'"

Increasingly our culture uses images to convey knowledge, Halla said, so it feels inconsistent to go into a church service where none are incorporated. The ongoing discussion in Baptist churches especially is how to bring creativity, artistry and the imagination into worship in a way that is meaningful and relevant, Halla said. ■

"People remember 80 percent of what they see and 20 percent of what they hear, so it is important that people of all ages see the gospel presented."

**Sally Smith
San Souci Baptist Church, Coden**



Photo courtesy of Westwood Ballet

Westwood Ballet, a ministry of Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, provides a Christian worldview of dance as art and instills in students the desire to use their talents to glorify God.



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Hodges Chapel at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School communicates the love of God through prayerfully designed art and architecture.



Photo by Caroline Summers

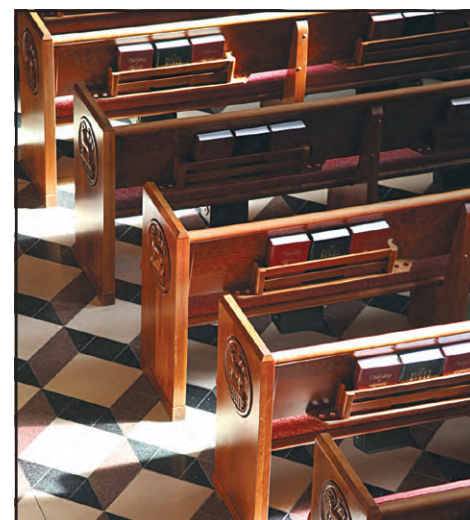


Photo by Caroline Summers

Architecture

Layout, artistic design of worship space used to 'direct us to God,' lift spirits

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

Situated in the center of Divinity Hall at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, Hodges Chapel is a sacred space that daily declares the good news of Jesus, often in complete silence.

At services throughout the week, community members join the students, faculty and staff of Beeson for worship in the chapel, where the gospel is both spoken and sung.

At other times the chapel communicates the love of God through prayerfully designed art and architecture, according to Vickie Gaston, curator of Hodges Chapel and coordinator of spiritual life ministries at Beeson Divinity School.

Like other worship spaces that intentionally incorporate art into their design, the chapel hearkens back to a time in church history when images were used to communicate biblical and theological truths, Gaston said.

The subject of visual arts in the church, especially for Protestants, has a long and complex past, said Steve Halla, assistant professor of art at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

"Throughout history, the church has served as one of the most important supporters of the arts, providing financial support as well as a biblical and theological basis for thinking about art," Halla said. "At the same time, there has never been a time when the

church has embraced art with no major questions."

The debate about the proper place of art in worship was especially prominent in the Protestant church. For example, Martin Luther once said: "Truly one cannot expose the common man to the Word and work of God too much or too often. Even if we sing and speak it, chime and preach it, write and read it, paint and draw it, nevertheless Satan is always only too eager and zealous to hinder and suppress it."

Other Protestant reformers feared people would worship an image or its artist instead of God the Creator, so they rid their churches of art and ornamentation that might detract worshippers' attention from the Bible and sermon. That fear was passed down through the generations, creating a barrier to the use of art in ways that are beneficial to worship, said John Woods, minister of worship at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association.

Scriptural foundation

"As Baptists, our earliest days were spent rejecting overt iconography, so many of our buildings are more utilitarian rather than ornate," Woods said.

As a result, a worship space like Hodges Chapel can seem foreign to first-time visitors, Gaston said. One of the first things she explains during tours is the scriptural foundation for every element included in the design of the chapel.

For example, the cross is a dominant feature, from the chapel's cruciform interior shape to the cross that sits atop the exterior dome of the building. There are 66 pillars in the chapel, representing the books of the Bible.

In the center of the chapel's interior dome is an artistic rendering of Jesus, bearing the marks of the crucifixion on His outstretched hands. Surrounding Him is the "great cloud of witnesses" Paul describes in Hebrews 12:1-2. Other artistic representations of biblical texts and reminders of church history fill the space as well. However the art and objects themselves are not the point, Gaston said.

"Nothing in the chapel is set aside as something man did. The signs and symbols direct us to God, but we do not worship them. The artwork throughout the chapel is meant to communicate the covenantal love of God for His people through His Word and in the landscape of the wider Christian tradition in His church," Gaston said.

In addition to communicating biblical and theological truth to the present generation, Christian art has lasting value as well, Halla said.

"Barring natural disaster or human interference, the durable nature of stone, wood and glass means that the art will outlast the artist who created it, so through art the church is able to pass down a physical testimony of its tradition and doctrine," he said.

In many churches, stained glass windows are the dominant example of sanctuary

art. JoAnn Cole, a member of First Baptist Church, Ashville, in St. Clair Baptist Association, said she seldom thinks of the windows in the church's sanctuary as art. Instead she looks to the scenes for inspiration and encouragement.

"Sometimes my attention is brought to a specific window at a specific time, and it reminds me of that time in Jesus' life and what the Scripture says. It just lifts my spirits," Cole said.

'Looking through the art'

Such a response highlights the purpose of art in worship, Woods said.

"The point is not that we're looking at the art but that we are looking through the art," he said.

Ultimately the role of art and architecture in a sacred space is to remind believers of the source of their faith, Gaston said.

"We're reminded Who comes into our hearts and makes each of us a 'temple of the Holy Spirit,'" Gaston said. "The main word we pray visitors will see during their time in the chapel is Emmanuel, 'God is with us.' We want them to leave this space with that word in their hearts."

Services at Hodges Chapel are held weekly during the fall and spring semesters on Tuesdays at 11 a.m. and are open to the public. The chapel is also open to visitors at other times. For more information or to schedule a tour, call Vickie Gaston at 205-726-2227 or visit www.beesondivinity.com/chapel. ☞

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.

BALDWIN

► **New Life Church, Bay Minette**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Oct. 6. Services will begin at 10 a.m. Former pastor Otis Thames will speak. Enjoy singing, preaching and visit the Church History Museum. A covered dish lunch will follow. John Montalvo is pastor.

BIBB

► **Six Mile Church, Brierfield**, will hold a fifth Sunday singing Sept. 29, 11 a.m. featuring The Heartmen Quartet. Lunch will follow. Everyone is invited. For information call Daniel Parsons at 205-225-0234. Bob Hope is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Hillview Church, Forestdale**, will celebrate its 120th anniversary Sept. 22, 10:25 a.m. Several former church members and staff members will be a part of the celebration. Everyone is invited and a fellowship lunch will follow the service. Mark Barber is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Ocmulgee Church, Selma**, will host The Heartmen Quartet for an hour of Southern Gospel Sunday on Sept. 29, 7 p.m. Danny Sumerlin is pastor.

COFFEE

► **First Church, Enterprise**, will hold a ladies power lunch Sept. 26, noon-1 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Emily Clark will speak. RSVP by Sept. 23 by calling Michele at 334-393-5683. Lunch will be catered and child care provided upon request. The event is open to the community. Sonny Moore is pastor. ► **Mount Gilead Church, Elba**, will hold a singing with The Stricklands on Sept. 29, 11 a.m.-noon. Everyone is invited. Fred Fowler is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate homecoming and its 50th anniversary Oct. 6. The service will be at 10:30 a.m. and lunch will follow. Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will speak and Starla Jones, of Greenville, will be the guest musician. Don Donald of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission will present a 50th anniversary plaque to the church family. For information call the church office at 251-578-1024. Jim Griffin is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Jeff Thomas** is the new pastor of **Bon Air Church**. Thomas holds a degree from Baptist Bible

Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville; a bachelor of science degree from Samford University in Birmingham; and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He has previously served churches in Alabama and Georgia, including Ridgeview Church, Talladega; Northside Church, Manchester, Ga.; Oldfield Church, Sylacauga; and Hopewell Church, Bessemer, until his retirement in 2009. Since retirement, he served as pastor of Fayetteville Church, Sylacauga, until July. He is married to Carolyn.

COVINGTON

► **Pigeon Creek Church, Red Level**, will host "Love Thy Neighbor Day" on Sept. 28, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. This will be a day of fun, recreation and worship. There will be live music, door prizes and baked goods as well as prizes and games for adults and children. A volleyball tournament, archery contest and children's games will culminate with a live concert at 4 p.m. with the Brothers Forever gospel group. Everyone is invited. Mason Halacker is pastor.

DALE

► **Ariton Church** will celebrate its 122nd homecoming Sept. 22. There will be a music service and memorials at 10 a.m. Former pastor Tommy Jacobs will speak at the 11 a.m. service. A covered dish lunch will follow. All former pastors, members and friends are invited to attend. For information call the church at 334-762-2523. David Walsh is pastor.

LAMAR

► **Brian Berry** was ordained as deacon of **Fellowship Church, Vernon**, on July 28. Doug Bridges is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Lindsay Lane Church, Athens**, will celebrate its 25th anniversary Oct. 6. The morning worship service will be at 9:30 a.m. Evangelist Junior Hill will speak. A celebration service will be at 5 p.m. with Hill and Fred Lackey. Dinner will follow in the Family Life Center. Everyone is welcome. Dusty McLemore is pastor.

MADISON

► **Mount Zion Church, Huntsville**, will hold a Missions Celebration Conference on Sept. 29, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, will be the main speaker. State and international missionaries will be in breakout sessions. There also will be fel-

lowship with international food. For information call David Cochran at 256-837-2665. Ron Madison is pastor.

GENEVA

► **David Hingson** is the new pastor of **El Bethel Church, Chancellor**. He graduated from The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville in 2006. He previously served as student pastor of First Church, Chipley, Fla.

He and his wife, Heather, have one child.



HINGSON

MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will hold a Fifth Sunday Sing on Sept. 29, 5:30 p.m. with The Kempters. A finger food fellowship will follow. Chad Underwood is pastor. ► **Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery**, will host the Fresh Grounded Faith Conference featuring Jennifer Rothchild, Stormie Omartian and Meredith Andrews on Sept. 27-28. For information and tickets visit <http://freshgroundedfaith.com/montgomery-al/>.

MUD CREEK

► **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing with The Waltons on Sept. 29, 1:30 p.m. Johnny Thacker is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Pleasant Grove Association** will hold its 2013 Annual Associational Revival at Evergreen Church, Vance, Oct. 6-9. Cecil J. Peasley will speak Sunday at 6:30 p.m. and Monday at 7 p.m.; Kevin Hamm will speak Tuesday at 7 p.m. and Nate Young will speak Wednesday at 7 p.m. Dan Wiggins is director of missions.

RUSSELL

► **First Church, Hurtsboro**, will celebrate 142 years of ministry with homecoming on Oct. 6, 10:30 a.m. Tommy Poole will speak and Don Dixon Jr. will provide music. Chris Webb is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Parkway Church, Auburn**, will host a fellowship and cookout for the district four disaster relief team of Alabama Baptists on Sept. 28, 5 p.m. Special guest will be Christian comedian/musician Bro. Billy Bob Bohannon.



FBC Eulaton celebrates 125th anniversary

First Baptist Church, Eulaton, in Anniston celebrated its 125th anniversary Aug. 4 with the help of several former staff members.

Former pastor Harry Warren, who served as pastor in the late '70s and early '80s, spoke during the 10 a.m. worship service. Reggie Kirk, another former First, Eulaton, pastor, also helped during the service. Scott Prater, one of the former youth ministers in attendance, led the invitation, and former music director Dawn Huddleston joined current music director Angela Thrasher to lead a procession of music from the late 1800s to today.

Three framed certificates were presented to the Calhoun Baptist Association church during the service: one from the city of Montgomery; one from the association given by John Thomas, associate director of missions; and one from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission given by Sonja Adams.

Due to the large crowd in attendance, an overflow room with a live video feed was set up in the fellowship hall to accommodate the additional attendees, noted Pastor Bryan Williams.

Lunch was served afterward, and Williams said about 250 people attended the day's festivities.

Also after the service, attendees visited several rooms with special themes. Among those rooms was a "missionary room" that featured the missions work the church has done through the years and a "history room" that held artifacts and historical items.

Looking to the future of First, Eulaton, Williams said a primary vision is to "raise up leaders from amongst us" to go out and spread the gospel. He added the church has sent out missionaries in the past, and "our prayer is that more will be sent out," he said.

(Julie Payne)

Valley's Blanton Baptist marks 25 years

Blanton Baptist Church, Valley, celebrated its 25th anniversary Aug. 4 beginning with a singing at 10 a.m. with the Ward Family.

A worship service followed at 11 a.m., and Tammy Irmiter, the wife of Pastor Fran Irmiter, read a history of the church that was written by one of Blanton Baptist's charter members.

Calvin Milford, representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a plaque commemorating its 25 years of ministry. Steve Baggett and Amelia Milner, who have attended Blanton since its beginnings, received the plaque on behalf of the church.

Former pastor Jim Dykes spoke during the service, and a covered dish lunch followed.

"We had a really good turnout of members and former members who came to celebrate with us," Tammy Irmiter said.

Fran Irmiter said the vision for the East Liberty Baptist Association church is about service and serving others. "Our vision is really to be a church in the community that shines light like we're supposed to," he said, adding that he believes "we do that best through service and being God's hands ... and feet and being there for people."

(Julie Payne)

Gardendale's Pineywood celebrates 75 years

Pineywood Baptist Church, Gardendale, marked its 75th anniversary July 14 with a service that began at 10:30 a.m.

The anniversary committee made handheld fans that featured the church's 75th celebration, and those fans were passed out to attendees as keepsakes.

During the service, Pastor Eddie Hughes incorporated Hebrews 12:1-2 into his message and a former church member sang.

Pat Musselwhite, representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to the church, and Charlotte LeSueur, church treasurer, read a brief history of Pineywood Baptist.

Hughes noted that a dinner followed and said the entire day was "a very good time."

Speaking about the vision for the future of the North Jefferson Baptist Association church, Hughes said it "is to go out and reach our community as much as we can to bring them into the fold of God ... to see lives changed ... that's the main thing."

(Julie Payne)

Baptist News Briefs

Compiled from Wire Services

BWA to dialogue with World Methodist Council

WASHINGTON — A planning meeting for the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) international dialogue with the World Methodist Council took place at the Wesley Chapel in London in the United Kingdom, Aug. 28–29.

The dialogue is planned for 2014–2018 and will explore the theme Faith Active in Love: Sung and Preached, Confessed and Remembered, Lived and Learned.

“Participation in bilateral dialogues is an expression of BWA’s commitment to continue the mission of God whose Messiah prayed for the unity of the church so that the world might believe,” BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said, extrapolating from the Gospel according to John. “In asking how we might manifest this oneness, we are drawn to the words of the apostle Paul that ‘the only thing that counts is faith working through love.’”

Those attending the planning meeting agreed the dialogue should aim at a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, one another; mutual exchange of gifts for the enrichment and renewal of Baptist and Methodist churches; increased participation in a common mission and witness in the world; and deeper fellowship and cooperation by identifying and overcoming barriers.

“Now that the focus of the dialogue has been identified, the international team to represent BWA will soon be appointed,” Callam said. The teams for the dialogue will be made up of six people from each group.

The BWA team for the planning meeting in London was Callam; Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham; Stephen R. Holmes, senior lecturer in systematic theology for the University of St. Andrews in Fife, Ky.; and Curtis Freeman, research professor of theology and Baptist studies for Duke Divinity School at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

Russell Moore inaugurated as new ERLC president

WASHINGTON — Russell D. Moore was inaugurated as the new president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) on Sept. 10 in a ceremony at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington. He was elected in March and took office in June.



MOORE

Members of Congress, at least one Obama administration official, religious leaders, advocacy organization representatives and most of the Southern Baptist Convention’s entity heads participated or observed as Moore received encouragement and challenges from speakers in a service marked by hymn singing, Bible reading and prayer.

The ERLC addresses moral, social and church-state issues — and their public policy implications — on behalf of Southern Baptists, but Moore said in his inaugural address the gospel is the focus of the entity’s charge.

The mission of God’s people and the ERLC, Moore said, “is not simply to speak about what the law of God has revealed. It is not simply to speak of the ethical norms that the Scripture has given to us. It is to speak primarily with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Phillip Martin performs for senior adults of the Sunshine Club at FBC Pelham on Sept. 10. Since 2007, Martin has performed as The River City Band more than 250 times.

One-man show

Montgomery Baptist’s act popular among senior adults

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

When Phillip Martin threw together a few songs for his 95-year-old cousin Mary Kate and her friends at a Montgomery nursing home, he never dreamed it would be anything more than a one-time event.

That was in 2007, and since then Martin has performed more than 250 times as The River City Band.

Martin performed his one-man show “A Walk Down Memory Lane” for the Sunshine Club of First Baptist Church, Pelham, on Sept. 10.

With songs like “Hound Dog,” “Hey Good Lookin’” and “Rock Around the Clock,” Martin had the nearly 50 senior adults of the Sunshine Club clapping along and singing the words they remembered from their youth.

Audience members said the show “brought back memories.”

And that’s partly why Martin continues to perform for nursing homes, assisted living centers, churches and other groups, he said.

“If you could see the looks in folks’ eyes when they remember something, they light up,” Martin said. “I get a kick out of entertaining ... and I like talking with folks afterward.”

And because of The River City Band, Martin was recently inducted into the Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame.

Born and raised in Ensley, Martin played football through high school and was an All-City and All-State player. He attended Auburn University on a football scholarship and earned his master’s degree from Samford University in Birmingham.

Martin worked at IBM for 30 years before retiring. He said music really wasn’t a part of his life until he decided to break out of his “introverted shell” and play for his cousin.

After that first performance, Martin said he went up to a nursing home resident and asked her what she thought of the songs.

“She struggled to get out the words ‘I had fun,’” Martin recalled. “A nurse then called me over and I thought I was in trouble but she said that woman had a stroke 5 years earlier and that was the first time she’d said anything.”

“That scared me,” he said jokingly. “I thought I better start trying to do this more.”

Never formally trained in music, Martin plays the piano by ear and sings songs he “grew up with.”

Paul Moore, associate pastor and director of senior adult ministries for First, Pelham, said someone had heard of The River City Band and suggested Martin come perform at the Sunshine Club’s monthly fellowship meeting and meal.

Moore organized the event with Martin and it “had a good turnout” and was “wonderful.”

After several songs, Martin encouraged the Sunshine Club to visit family and friends who live in nursing homes. A visit “means the world to them,” he said, and is another motivation that keeps him singing and playing songs for senior adults.

“Something keeps drawing me back,” he said with a smile.

He and his wife, Gloria, are members of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, and have one daughter and four grandchildren.

For information about The River City Band, visit <http://therivercityband.webs.com> or to speak with Martin, call 334-799-6696.



MARTIN

Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to Date through August 31, 2013

AUGUST

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,558,333
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,207,707
Under Goal for Month.....	\$350,626

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$28,466,664
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$27,553,352
Under Goal for Year.....	\$913,312

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

Yearlong celebration

Rose Sunday first of Judson's 175th anniversary events

To commemorate its milestone 175th anniversary year, Judson College in Marion kicked off a yearlong celebration Aug. 25 with Rose Sunday, a Founder's Day celebration of students, alumnae and friends of the college.

Rose Sunday was first observed Sept. 19, 1915, but can be traced back to when the founder and first president Milo P. Jewett "encouraged" the student body to join him as he walked the two blocks to Siloam Baptist Church to worship each Sunday. Jewett would rap his cane on the stair railing in the students' dormitory to announce he was about to make this journey.

Rose Sunday preparations began Aug. 24 as the students gathered to weave ivy into a chain symbolizing the sisterhood among the group. Later in the day, more than 400 Marion Military Institute (MMI) cadets marched in full uniform approximately half a mile to observe a step-sing performance by Judson students who sing iconic Judson songs. The two student bodies then enjoyed a joint picnic and ice cream social. An MMI administrator joked to Judson College President David Potts that MMI and Judson had been "going steady" for more than 100 years now.

On Aug. 25, the underclassmen lined the walkway and held the woven ivy chain in honor of the senior class. The seniors, dressed in their academic regalia and donning the college's signature flower, the red rose, began the procession joined by faculty, staff and alumnae. In years past, students were required to wear white gloves to this event. While the gloves are no longer required, many continue the tradition and also wear hats.

Judson tradition

In honor of these customs, a display of hats and gloves has been set up in the window of a downtown storefront.

The celebration has also encompassed a celebration of the founders of the college. As is his custom, Potts shared some of the history of the school. This



Photo by Mary Amelia Taylor

The senior class of Judson College is led by Riley Tunnell (right), senior class president, and Carli Ludlow (left), SGA president.

year, he focused on the role of the founders of the college. The great-great-grandsons of founder Gen. Edwin D. King were in attendance along with members of their family. Siloam Pastor John Nicholson brought words of welcome from the home church and was joined by special guest speaker Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Lance's message called on the Judson community to notice those in need and help them in any way they can rather than simply pass them by.

The King family was among the honored guests at a luncheon following the Rose Sunday service and participated in a ceremony in the cemetery adjacent to the college where their ancestor is buried. (Judson, TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Martha Hagood

Baptist medical missionary emeritus dies

Martha Hagood, missionary emeritus of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), died Sept. 9. She was 89.

A native of Oxford, Hagood graduated from Albertville High School. She earned her degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and also graduated from the University of Alabama Medical School in Birmingham.

She served 43 years as an SBC medical missionary in Kyoto, Japan, and Eku, Nigeria. In addition, she spoke at many churches and to Woman's Missionary Union groups about missions.

Hagood was honored as alumna of the year by Samford University in 1979.

At the time of her death, she was a member of First Baptist Church, Columbia.

Hagood is survived by one sister and many other relatives.

(TAB)



HAGOOD



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J. Rodney Bledsoe,
Legal and
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Church REALITY

- 1** Does your church ever see itself as an exception to the biblical teaching about balancing love for self with love for others?
- 2** Does your church cut corners on truth-telling?
- 3** Does your church ever ignore community demographics because they make you uncomfortable?
- 4** Has your church ever fired staff members simply due to personal preferences?
- 5** Do you ever explain your long history of short ministerial tenures by saying "you can't find good help anymore"?
- 6** Have you ever heard these words said in a church business meeting? "That may be in the Bible, but ..."
- 7** Have personal agendas ever supplanted spiritual discernment when planning the congregation's future?
- 8** Are you locked into programs or traditions whose relevance and meaning no one can explain?
- 9** Do you sometimes feel that your staff lives in constant fear of offending certain families and/or individuals?
- 10** Does the majority of your financial support come from those over 65?

If you answered 'yes' to more than a couple of these questions ...

... then you may need to step back and assess your congregation's perception of reality.

When we lose touch with reality and live by feelings, we frequently fly our lives into the ground. We all need trusted truth-tellers to help keep us honest and rightly oriented to reality. We can never assume we have a corner on the truth and are above the need for constructive critique.

It is possible for an entire congregation to ignore reality and embrace false perceptions and impressions, but healthy congregations are constantly monitoring themselves and asking the hard questions that keep them rightly oriented to God's kingdom agenda.

They focus upon organizing themselves to live out the two great commandments and the Great

Commission in their ZIP code and then into the world.

Using the unique strengths of the congregation's past, they proactively press those positive traits forward into the future. They are willing to be innovative and think creatively about tomorrow without being held captive by their past.

It will require humility and a Kingdom agenda.

It will call for wisdom that is beyond you.

It depends upon visionary leaders.

It will drive you to your knees in prayer.

It is the difference between life and death.

Source: Bill Wilson, president of the Center for Congregational Health in Winston-Salem, N.C./ABP

VOICE YOUR **OPINION**



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

Remember to:

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

KNOW WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF SUSPECTED CONCUSSION



A concussion is an injury caused by a blow to the head in which the brain moves rapidly and may collide with the inside of the skull.

Even a minor fall or collision may be of concern, so be alert to symptoms such as headaches, unsteadiness, confusion or other types of abnormal behavior.

Any athlete with a suspected concussion:

- Should be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY/ACTIVITY
- Should be urgently assessed medically
- Should not be left alone
- Should not drive a motor vehicle

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An afternoon of singing great hymns and gospel songs selected by the congregation.

'Life-affirming measures' recent trend in state legislatures

(continued from page 1)

Some of the shutdowns have been of major clinics. For example, in July *The Washington Post* reported that NOVA Women's Healthcare in Fairfax, Va., shut down after state and local governments enacted regulations the abortion provider appeared unable to meet. The clinic had been Virginia's leading provider of abortions.

The reasons given for the upswing in closings are varied even among pro-lifers. They include:

- ▶ the increasing state regulation and oversight of clinics,
- ▶ a growth in pro-life opinion and activity and
- ▶ a decline in the abortion rate.

In some cases, clinics have shut down when abortion doctors retired or were no longer licensed. State legislatures enacted 69

pro-life laws this year, according to a report released Sept. 5 by Americans United for Life (AUL). In all, 48 states considered about 360 such proposals in 2013, AUL reported.

The legislative action in 2013 continued a recent trend in states: 70 "life-affirming measures" became law in 2011 and 38 in 2012, according to AUL.

Clinic shutdowns

Like Alabama, North Carolina and Texas have taken measures to make the procedure and clinics safer for women and have helped escalate the number of clinic shutdowns. In addition, North Dakota and Wisconsin joined Alabama and Texas in mandating abortion doctors have admitting privileges at local hospitals.

While the actions of state legislatures and agencies appear to have contributed to clinic shutdowns, the growing activism of pro-lifers also has been an important ingredient, said David Bereit, national director of 40 Days for Life.

"I believe the increase in closures is due to record numbers of Christians praying for an end to abortion and getting actively



BP photo

The sign outside Planned Parenthood in Bryan, Texas, comes down in late August, marking another abortion clinic closing in 2013.

involved in pro-life efforts where they live — recognizing that change is not going to come from politicians in Washington, D.C., anytime soon," Bereit said.

Since 2007, 40 Days has conducted its semiannual campaigns of peaceful prayer vigils outside abortion clinics in more than 500 cities nationally and internationally. More than 575,000 people have participated, and 40 Days reports 39 clinics have closed permanently after their campaigns.

Bereit believes even more clinic closures are in the offing.

"The momentum is shifting dramatically in the pro-life direction, and as even more people answer the call to 'speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves' and 'rescue those being led to the slaughter,'" Bereit said, citing verses in Proverbs 31 and 24, respectively, "I believe we will see many more abortion centers closing in the near future." (BP contributed)

—Correction—

In the article "Hines Memorial ministers to community through archery" in the July 18 issue, Hines Memorial Baptist Church was incorrectly noted as being located in Beaver Creek. The church is in Bear Creek.

MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Axis First Baptist Church is seeking a God-led, spirit-filled individual for the position of pastor. Send resumes to: P.O. Box 98, Axis, AL 36505.

PASTOR: Fayetteville Baptist Church near Sylacauga is accepting resumes from retired or semi-retired ordained ministers to pastor our small congregation with emphasis on pastoral care. Sunday morning services only. Send resume to: B.J. Wood, 5196 Childersburg-Fayetteville Hwy., Childersburg, AL 35044. Phone: 256-378-5882.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Grace Baptist in Montevallo is seeking God's direction for a bivocational pastor. Please email resumes to: gracebaptistmontevallo@gmail.com or call 205-602-3847.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION: Please send resumes to: Hepzibah Baptist Church, 5329 Renfro Road, Talladega, AL 35160.

MUSIC MINISTER: Shades Crest Baptist Church, a 1,200-member CBF/SBC congregation in Birmingham, Ala., seeks an experienced minister to lead a multifaceted music and worship ministry. SCBC values traditional worship that is blended with contemporary elements in order to honor God and meet the needs of people. Successful candidates should have a graduate degree in music, experience in leading a music program including fully graded choirs and orchestra, and a commitment to serve on a pastoral team. If interested, send resume and cover letter by Nov. 15 to: scbcmusicsearch@gmail.com, or by mail to: Search Committee, Shades Crest Baptist Church, 452 Park Ave., Birmingham, AL 35226.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP: First Baptist Church, Marion, Ark., is seeking full-time minister of worship to lead a large, multifaceted worship ministry. Resumes and recommendations can

be sent to: Dr. Clay Hallmark, FBC, P.O. Box 6, Marion, AR 72364, or emailed to: clay.hallmark@firstmarion.org.

WORSHIP LEADER: Grace Baptist in Montevallo is seeking God's direction for a worship leader to lead our congregation in praise and worship. Please email resumes to: gracebaptistmontevallo@gmail.com or call 205-602-3847.

PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR: Blue Springs Baptist Church, Somerville, Ala. Prefer blended/traditional music. Send resume to: Music Committee, Blue Springs Baptist Church, 385 Blue Springs Road, Somerville, AL 35670.

PASTOR OF YOUTH & YOUNG FAMILIES: Albertville First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor of youth and young families. This position will oversee all aspects of ministry to teenagers and will develop and lead ministry to parents of young families. Please send resumes to: youth@albertvillefbc.org or to: First Baptist Church, 309 East Main Street, Albertville, AL 35950.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR: Belmor Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational youth pastor who will serve the church by planning and leading our youth ministry. Contact belmorbaptist@att.net for more information.

OTHER POSITIONS

CHURCH SECRETARY: Heflin Baptist Church has an immediate opening for a church secretary 27.5 hours per week. Resume may be emailed to: pmorishbc@centurytel.net, or mailed to: P.O. Box 116, Heflin, AL 36264. Deadline to apply is Oct. 1.

HOUSE PARENTS: Christian couple needed to serve as relief house parents at the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes in Decatur. Position is full-time with benefits. Couple must be committed to Christian walk and willing to be flexible in work schedule. Typical

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DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: The Tallapoosa Baptist Association is seeking a director of missions. Please forward resumes to: TBA Search Team, Box 308, Dadeville, AL 36853 or email: gwig@att.net. Deadline: Oct. 1.

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Pastor Ricky Hall

Shiloh Baptist Church, Hartford

At some point in our lives all of us have experienced physical pain. It can be as simple as a headache or as serious as cancer. Many people struggle through life with illnesses that are undiagnosed. They go from one physician to another with the same outcome. This can become very expensive and also very discouraging. Undiagnosed physical problems can be traced all the way back to biblical times.

This is evident in Luke 8:43–48: "And a woman who had a hemorrhage for 12 years and could not be healed by anyone came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. And Jesus said, 'Who is the one who touched Me?' And while they were all denying it, Peter said, 'Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You.' But Jesus said, 'Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.' When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him and how she had been immediately healed. And He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.'"

In this passage Jesus confirms He is the Great Physician. This woman had spent her life savings trying to find a doctor who could heal her. She had depleted all of her resources and was still undiagnosed. But she knew if she could get close enough to Jesus, He could heal her. She believed He was her only chance. As she touched His robe the bleeding stopped. She was cured.

However Jesus wanted to do more than just heal her physically. He wanted to heal her spiritually. Jesus wanted to meet the person who had touched His robe. He wanted to give her an opportunity to accept Him as Lord and Savior. This woman received physical and spiritual healing in the same day. She had an encounter with Jesus Christ that changed her earthly life and eternal life.

What about you? Are you trusting Jesus to meet your physical and spiritual needs? He is just a prayer away. 🙏

Gay rights vs. religious rights

Becket Fund lists seven areas to watch where freedom could be impacted

The rights of religious groups or individuals that object to same-sex “marriage” continue to clash with those pursued by gay rights advocates. Now the fight that started at state ballot boxes and in courtrooms has moved to floral shops, bakeries and photo studios.

As churches are concerned about the potential of lawsuits, some are changing their bylaws to explicitly reflect their views on traditional man-woman marriage.

A bakery in Gresham, Ore., owned by a Christian family, under investigation by state officials for refusing to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple, decided to close its doors. And in August, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that photographers could not refuse to shoot gay wedding ceremonies even though the state does not officially recognize gay “marriage.” The court ruled that declining to

photograph a gay wedding was similar to declining to work at an interracial wedding.

Many of the legal skirmishes are not directly tied to federal recognition of gay “marriages” after the Supreme Court’s decision striking down most of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Instead the fights largely revolve around state and local anti-discrimination ordinances.

Cases still going on

Upcoming battles include whether religious opposition to same-sex “marriage” constitutes discrimination and what happens when a discrimination claim bumps up against an individual’s or institution’s religious freedom. Many cases are still being resolved:

► The lawyer who represents the owners of a Colorado bakery say they could face a year in prison

for refusing to make a cake for a gay wedding.

► A Kentucky county commission sided with a gay rights group in a discrimination complaint in 2012 after a Christian printer declined to print T-shirts for a gay pride festival.

► A florist in Richland, Wash., who refused to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding launched a countersuit against the state attorney general, who sued her for violating the state’s Consumer Protection Act.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange said he is “very troubled” by the cases and “the judicial ideology they represent.”

“No government should be able to compel people of faith to compromise their religious beliefs as the price of citizenship,” Strange said. “I hope that the United States Supreme Court steps in to correct these abuses.”

But the rulings will have no direct impact in Alabama, he said. “The Alabama Constitution provides greater protection for religious liberty than the federal Constitution and most state constitutions.”

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a Washington-based religious freedom law firm, issued a brief on areas where religious freedom could be impacted by the DOMA ruling, outlining seven:

► Public accommodation laws

Many religious institutions provide services beyond their congregations that are considered “public accommodation,” such as health care, counseling, child care, education, wedding facilities and adoption services. Some fear that a lack of explicit conscience protections could open the doors to lawsuits.

► Housing discrimination

Courts in some states have required landlords to allow unmarried cohabitating couples as tenants despite the landlords’ religious objections. A federal recognition of marriage gives same-sex couples a strong standing to access housing under anti-discrimination laws.

► Employment discrimination laws

Currently 21 states and the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; most state laws include an exemption for religious organizations. A federal law to make anti-gay discrimination illegal nationwide has lagged in Congress for 20 years.

Now the question is: If a gay man or lesbian is fired for being gay, and that person’s “marriage” is now recognized by the federal government, does anything change? Does a federally recognized “marriage” offer greater protection in discrimination claims?

► Government facilities access

Access to government facilities, such as schools, parks and other spaces, could become challenging for some who oppose same-sex “marriage.” For instance, the Boy Scouts have lost leases to campgrounds, parks and a government building headquarters and lost the right to participate in a charitable payroll deduction program.

► Maintaining licenses or accreditation

As many governments would re-

quire all state marriages to be treated equally, some worry about loss of licenses or accreditation. Many cite the case where Catholic Charities in Boston and San Francisco shut down adoption services because the agencies refused to comply with anti-discrimination laws and place children with same-sex couples. Religious colleges and universities also fear loss of accreditation if they oppose same-sex “marriage.”

► Government grants and contracts qualifications and tax exemptions

As many religious institutions seek grants and contracts for services, some see a tension between providing services and receiving government funding. Some also are concerned about the possibility of state or local tax exemption challenges or the ability to apply for government funding.

► Educational and employment opportunities

The decision could continue to impact government workers and students at public universities. Julea Ward, a master’s in counseling student at Eastern Michigan University, told her professors she could not help gay and lesbian clients with their same-sex relationships. She was expelled for violating the school’s anti-discrimination policy and given \$75,000 in a settlement.

At least 12 Massachusetts justices of the peace have resigned because they declined to facilitate same-sex “marriages.” (RNS, TAB)

“No government should be able to compel people of faith to compromise their religious beliefs.”

Luther Strange
Alabama attorney general

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Psalm 121:1-2

HEALTH ALERT!**Does Hearing Loss Increase your Risk of Falling?**

New studies by researchers at Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging suggests that hearing loss significantly increases your risk of falling.

A Public Health Problem

Among older adults (age 65 or greater), falls are a serious health problem and are the leading cause of injury death in the U.S. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), in 2009 nearly 20,000 older adults died from unintentional fall injuries, and 2.2 million nonfatal injuries were treated in emergency rooms. Direct medical costs resulting from falls are estimated at approximately \$30 billion dollars per year.

Research Proves It

To make the connection between hearing loss and fall risk, researchers analyzed data from more than 2,000 people between the ages of 40 and 69, from

2001 to 2004, as part of the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. As part of the survey, the participants had their hearing tested and underwent vestibular testing (an examination of the balance mechanism of the inner ear), in addition to answering demographic and other health-related questions.

The Risk Is Real

Despite accounting for multiple factors related to fall risk (age, gender, medical condition, etc.), researchers determined that even a "mild" degree of hearing loss nearly triples the risk of falling.

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- ☐ ☐ Do you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves?
- ☐ ☐ Do many people you talk to seem to mumble or not speak clearly?
- ☐ ☐ Do you misunderstand what others are saying and respond in a way that may embarrass you?
- ☐ ☐ Do you have trouble understanding the speech of women and children?
- ☐ ☐ Do people get annoyed because you misunderstand what they say?

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¹ Lin F, Ferrucci L. "Hearing loss and falls among older adults in the United States" Arch Intern Med 2012; 172: 369-371.

² Hearing Loss Self-Test adapted from the U.S. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders, National Institutes of Health. Ten Ways to Recognize Hearing Loss. (2010). Available online: <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/10ways.asp>.

Benefits of hearing instruments vary by type and degree of hearing loss, noise environment, accuracy of hearing evaluation and proper fit.

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U.S. News ranks Samford, UMobile among nation's best colleges

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Rising one spot from its previous year's ranking, Samford University in Birmingham claimed the No. 3 spot in the "Regional University South" category of *U.S. News & World Report's* 2014 Best Colleges rankings.

The annual rankings, which cover a variety of categories, were released Sept. 10.

Only two other schools — Elon University in North Carolina and Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., were ranked higher than Samford in the "Regional University South" category.

"This is a great milestone for Samford University, and many people have worked to make this possible," said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland.

Measuring success

"We continually assess our standing compared with our peers, but we always believe that the best measure of our success is in the academic and career accomplishments of our students, faculty and alumni," he said.

The university also received high marks in several special categories related to the 2014 rankings: it tied for fourth among

the eight schools ranked in the South for "A Strong Commitment to Teaching," ranked 11th in the South on the "Best Value Schools" list and was one of 25 schools in the South to be named an "A+ School for B Students."

Among other Alabama schools ranked in the "Regional University South" category, Spring Hill College in Mobile ranked 16th, University of Montevallo ranked 36th, University of North Alabama in Florence and Troy University both ranked 80th and Auburn University-Montgomery ranked 84th.

Like Samford, the University of Mobile (UMobile) also raised a spot from its previous year's *U.S. News & World Report* ranking, receiving the No. 27 spot in the "Regional College South" category.

"We are pleased to be recognized among the Best Regional Colleges in the South by

U.S. News & World Report," said UMobile President Mark Foley.

"The 2014 rankings mark the third consecutive year that the University of Mobile has risen in the poll. Our integration of learning, faith and leadership into all aspects of academics and campus life results in a quality Christian higher education that continues to receive national attention."

Other Alabama schools ranking in the top 50 in the "Regional College South" category were Tuskegee University (13th), Huntingdon College in Montgomery (26th) and Faulkner University in Montgomery and Oakwood University in Huntsville (48th).

The University of Alabama and Auburn University ranked No. 86 and No. 91 respectively in the "National Universities" category.

"This is a great milestone for Samford University, and many people have worked to make this possible."

**Andrew Westmoreland
Samford University
president**



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NAMB

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 22

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson

Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

SALVATION OFFERED

John 3:1-16

Are You Interested? (1-3)

Nicodemus is a man of the Pharisees and a member of the Jewish governing body called the Sanhedrin. He comes to Jesus “by night.” In his Gospel, John uses the word “night” to refer to moral and spiritual darkness. Nicodemus approaches Jesus at night, but his own “night” is blacker than he knew.

It is the evidence of the miraculous signs that convinces Nicodemus that Jesus is no ordinary teacher. He must be “a teacher come from God.” This assessment of Jesus is disappointing. Nicodemus does not suggest that Jesus is a prophet or the Messiah but simply a teacher mightily endowed with God’s power. He is obviously curious about Jesus, but he still falls a long way short of confession that he is the uniquely Promised One.

Nicodemus has not yet asked Jesus anything formally, though the implied question is something like: “Who are you? Are you a prophet? Are you the Messiah?” But Jesus’ words are more than a response to a merely implied question. Nicodemus, like other Jews, wants to set up criteria by which to assess who Jesus is. Jesus rejects the priority of Nicodemus and radically questions his qualifications for sorting out heavenly things. Nicodemus claims he can see something of who Jesus is in the miracles. However Jesus insists no one can see the saving reign of God at all unless he is born again. To be “born again” is to be transformed in the core of your being by new, spiritual life that results from the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Do You Have Questions? (4-9)

Nicodemus does not understand. At this point he could not believe that new birth is a requirement for entrance into the Kingdom. Jesus sets out to restate His challenge in a slightly different form. Jesus says: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Born of water and the Spirit refers to spiritual

birth, which cleanses from sin and brings spiritual transformation and renewal. Water here does not refer to the water of physical birth nor baptism. The background is probably Ezekiel 36:25-27.

In verse 7 Jesus says: “Do not marvel that I said to you (singular), ‘You (plural) must be born again.’” The plural “you” includes Nicodemus, all the members of the Sanhedrin and the entire human race. For anyone to receive eternal life and be welcomed into the kingdom of God, he must be born again.

Just as you cannot see the wind but only its effects, so it is with the Spirit of God. No one can control the Holy Spirit, but when He works the effects are undeniable and unmistakable.

Do You Know the Truth? (10-12)

Nicodemus refuses to believe Jesus’ teaching about the new birth. Jesus asks him, “You are the Reverend Professor Doctor, and you do not understand these things?” As a prominent teacher, Nicodemus should have understood Jesus’ teaching about the new birth. This new life is like the resurrection depicted in Ezekiel 37 and the new heart in Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:26.

Jesus’ teaching is “earthly” in that it takes place on earth when people are born again. More importantly, Jesus’ teaching on new birth is elementary. Jesus says entrance into the Kingdom depends absolutely on new birth. If Nicodemus stumbles over this elementary teaching, then what is the use of going on to explain more of the details of life in the Kingdom?

Will You Believe? (13-16)

Jesus identifies Himself as the uniquely Promised One come down from heaven who will die for the sins of the world. John 3:16 presents the most famous gospel summary in the entire Bible. You do not have to die in your sins. Jesus lived the life you could not live and He died the death that you deserve so you can receive the gift of eternal life. Will you trust Jesus today? Christian, will you tell an unsaved person about Jesus?

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange

Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

THE PRESSURE OF WORDS

James 3:1-18

Verse 1

What a way to begin a lesson for Sunday School teachers. People in James’ day knew that words had power, particularly words that invoked God’s power. Once spoken, a person could not revoke a blessing, a curse or an oath (see 5:12; see also Gen. 25:29-34; 27:1-40; 48:8-20). Something similar happens when we teach about God: words have a powerful effect on those who listen to us or read what we write. Once we teach something, in many ways we cannot revoke it. That power extends to words believers speak to one another. James probably focused on the destructive power of words because that is what his congregations struggled with. In all that follows, when James talks about controlling speech (symbolized by the tongue) he is really talking about the human will.

Verse 2

“Perfect person” picks up the idea of 1:4. But here James is talking about the difficulty of controlling speech, so he shifts his rhetoric, using contradicting statements (“We all stumble” and “Whoever doesn’t stumble”) to impress on readers the challenge of controlling their tongues: it is so difficult that surely whoever can do it can control the entire body.

Verses 3-4

James introduced the verb “bridle” in the previous sentence and now he extends the metaphor: controlling speech is like directing a horse (a large animal) with a bridle (a small thing). It’s the same with ships: pilots steer large vessels with small rudders (compare 1:8). These metaphors for controlling the will were common among the Greek and Roman philosophers and so were probably also heard frequently in James’ day.

Verses 5-9

James’ use of “member” and “members” hints that he uses the body as a metaphor for the congregation (the Greek word has a similar range of meanings as the English word; Paul uses it in the same way). Not only must

people struggle to bridle their own tongues, congregations struggle with people who use language as a weapon: individuals who refuse to control what they say can cause grave harm to a congregation. James uses images of death: forest fire, hell, poison. He must think that, given free reign, such people can destroy a congregation. In verses 7 and 8, James returns to the story of creation (see 1:14-18): “cycle of nature” and “every kind of beast and bird has been tamed by mankind” recalls Genesis 1:20-25 and 1:26-28, and the reference to the tongue as “a restless evil, full of deadly poison” recalls the poisonous language of the snake in Genesis 3:1-7. Notice how the snake in Genesis causes great evil by telling the truth. (Does that ever happen today?) Verse 9, of course, recalls Genesis 1:6-27.

Verses 10-12

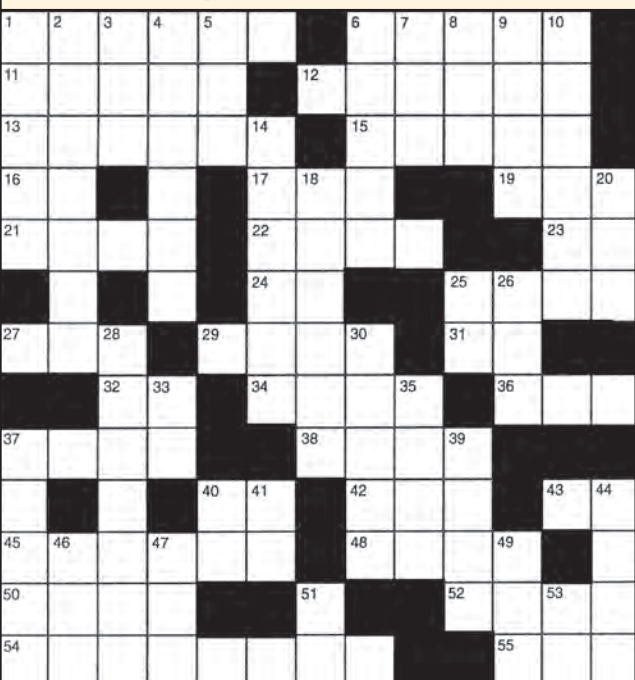
With “this ought not to be so,” James keeps working with the idea of creation: God intended some things to be so, but the human will is untamed. Like fresh water springs, fig trees and grapevines (compare Matt. 7:16-17; Luke 6:43-44); God intended people to use speech to do one thing (to bless, to build up the congregation), but people use its power to curse, to do damage, violating God’s intention.

Verses 13-18

James returns to the idea of God’s wisdom (1:5-7), which is ours for the asking, and, continuing to work with the image of the snake, he contrasts it with “earthly,” “unspiritual” and “devilish” wisdom. God’s wisdom yields the virtues of meekness, purity (of intention and deed), peaceableness, gentleness, reasonableness, mercifulness and good works. Earthly wisdom (which is responsible for the misuse of speech), by contrast, springs from the vices of bitter envy and selfish ambition and produces the vices of boasting and telling lies, disorder and “every kind of wickedness” (compare the famous Gal. 5:16-26). “Disorder” is the clue that James is still talking about the congregation. That emphasis will continue in chapter 4, which will occupy us next week.

Christian Crossword

By Udena McKee Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Led the Israelites over the Jordan river. (Josh. 4:1)
- Queen of the _____. (Matt. 12:42)
- A crown of gold round _____. (Ex. 25:11)
- Disciple and successor of Elijah. (1 Kings 19:16)
- Marked with bands.
- Part of the small intestine.
- Overdraft. (abbr.)
- Born in his _____ house. (Gen. 14:14)
- The _____es saw a man coming forth out of the city. (Judg. 1:24)
- _____ thou return unto the ground. (Gen. 3:19)
- Loose outer garment worn by ancient Romans.
- He built there an altar, and called the place _____-bethel. (Gen. 35:7)
- The Lord your God, _____ it is that fighteth for you. (Josh. 23:10)
- Spiral or twisted form.
- Who heard _____ words of God. (Num. 24:4)
- Whoso putteth his trust in

the Lord, shall be _____. (Prov. 29:25)

- _____ an earring of gold. (Prov. 25:12)
- Los Angeles. (abbr.)
- Thus you _____ify the word of God. (Matt. 15:6)
- One who excels.
- If a man have long _____. (1 Cor. 11:14)
- Past participle of lie.
- The men of Bethel and _____. (Neh. 7:32)
- Where golf ball is placed.
- Give _____ this day. (Matt. 6:11)
- City where the Philistines took the ark. (1 Sam. 5:1)
- First home of Adam and Eve. (Gen. 2:8)
- A native of Thailand.
- What hast thou _____? (Gen. 4:10)
- A good king of Judah. (2 Chron. 29:1)
- A male cat.

Down

- A dress or shirt ruffle.
- Shortest book of the Old Testament.
- Hannah prayed for a

- _____. (1 Sam. 1:11)
- To crowd together.
- Indian tribe from western U.S.
- His _____ was in his hand. (1 Sam. 17:40)
- Her mouth is smoother than _____. (Prov. 5:3)
- _____ them to fasten the curtains. (Ex. 26:6)
- _____ shall ye say to David. (1 Sam. 18:25)
- Your steps will not be _____ (ed). (Prov. 4:12)
- Where Joseph found his brothers. (Gen. 37:17)
- Full of sorrow.
- Jonadab told Amnon to pretend to be _____. (2 Sam. 13:5)
- Symbol for calcium.
- United States of America. (abbr.)
- Job’s friend. (Job 2:11)
- To fill with joy.
- Symbol for argon.
- Thou hast not _____ unto men, but unto God. (Acts 5:4)
- A tract of open land.
- Your Father knoweth what things ye have

- _____ of. (Matt. 6:8)
- Account of. (abbr.)
- Part of the psyche.
- All of a man’s ways _____ innocent to him. (Prov. 16:2)
- Female pronoun.
- Give me children, or else I _____. (Gen. 30:1)
- That which was torn by beasts I brought _____ unto thee (Gen. 31:39)
- Mother.
- Before them there were _____ such locusts. (Ex. 10:14)



RESOURCES:

Your Guide to Today's New Music and Literature

Sound Bites By Rick Sharp

JIMMY NEEDHAM

The Hymns Sessions (Vol. 1)
Independent digital-only release

This record started life as a thank-you gift to Needham's fans who, via the kickstart method of fundraising, financed Needham's last project "Clear the Stage." Needham's first indie release since his 2005 debut "For Freedom," "The Hymns Sessions" has taken on a life of its own, thanks to Needham's quirky voice, excellent performance and production values, and some amazing performances by guest artists.

You've maybe already heard, so let's just get it out before we go any further. "How Great Thou



Art," featuring Christian rapper Trip Lee IS as amazing as you've heard. Needham's delicate voice, juxtaposed with Lee's rap, and wrapped in a moving arrangement is perhaps the record's best, although every time I say that, I keep thinking of all the other excellent music on the record. Guest artist Kevin Jones' vocals, framed by simple acoustic guitar on "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" comes to mind.

There's something here for everybody: grinding B3 organ, clean blues guitar riffs, smoky jazz, delicate acoustic fingerstyle guitar, danceable percussion and on it goes. Yes this is a record of hymns like you've never heard.

You'll have to get this album digitally. It's available from places like iTunes, Amazon and Needham's own website. But get it you should.

SETH CONDREY

Keeps On Changing
North Point Music

On Aug. 27 Seth Condrey released "Keeps On Changing," his first English language solo project for North Point Music. His last release was a Spanish language record, and he garnered Dove's Spanish Language Album of the Year award for an earlier album.

Production was by Dove Award-winning producer Phillip LaRue, who also contributed to the songwriting effort.

Other songwriting help came from four-time Dove Award winner Ed Cash, Mike Donehey, Seth Mosley and others.



I often cringe when I keep throwing out "award-winning this-or-that" in describing an album, but it does give insight into what we might expect from a new record.

In this case, the insight is dead-on. This is a really good record, more contemplative than his others, and less rock oriented. "God of the Impossible" is perhaps the

closest to rock that the record offers, and even here there's more pop than rock.

Condrey describes this project as "the story of my life," with musical stories of failure, grace, love and trust. Indeed this record seems very personal and inward looking. The message here is clear to all Christians looking to make sense of this messy life.

Book Reviews By Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D.

A Year of Biblical Womanhood

Rachel Held Evans. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012. 321 pp. (Kindle Version).

Can you say "controversy"? The publication of this book set off a debate, particularly among conservatives — which was a good enough reason for me to decide I needed to read it. I mean, what could possibly be controversial about attempting to spend a year living as instructed by the Scriptures?

Well as it turned out ... there was plenty of fodder there. But first, the good part. The book was thoughtfully written by a talented writer who is obviously well versed in biblical doctrine. Her slant was somewhat liberal, but she was raised (in Alabama) by conservative parents and frequently demonstrated her familiarity with conservative beliefs. Additionally the author appeared to be transparent in sharing insights and conviction she experienced during the process. I was humbled and convicted by her apparent openness.

My overwhelming sense as I read through the book was that of a gigantic, yearlong publicity stunt. The author was clear about conducting the experiment for the purpose of writing a book about the experience, but some of her antics seem to have been planned for maximum newsworthiness rather than a genuine attempt at conform-

ing to biblical womanhood. Also the seemingly random mixture of Old Testament and New Testament was confusing — it was hard to understand what biblical womanhood the author was striving for.

I think, rather than controversial, I would describe the book as confusing, but certainly interesting and informative.

My Mountain Has a Name

Patsy Wilder Brown. Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2012. 99 pp. (Paperback).

This book was not at all what I expected. It seems that everyone who survives _____ (you fill in the blank) thinks they should write a book. (Some of them shouldn't.) Add to that the fact that I have developed a somewhat negative view of this publisher based on books I have read, and my expectations were not high.

Pleasant surprise. The book is not likely to win any literary prizes, but the author has told an interesting story and told it well. She seems completely transparent in her account of an encounter with cancer in 2011; she shares the good and the unflattering. The story is liberally laced with humor as well as its share of pain, all presented in such an unselfconscious way that the reader is able to perceive the author's personality shining through.

Brown's purpose in writing the

book was to help others going through a devastating cancer diagnosis; I think she has succeeded in producing a work that will do just that.

Slow Moon Rising

Eva Marie Everson. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2013. 376 pp. (Paperback).

If you're a fan of Eva Marie Everson (and I definitely am), you may have been waiting for this book (I definitely was). "Slow Moon Rising" is the last in the Cedar Key trilogy, a series that delves into the lives of the fictional Claybourne family, who own a vacation home in Cedar Key, Fla.

The book is a romance, but not your typical saccharine hearts-and-flowers romance; the series deals with tough issues in a way Christian fiction often fails to do. The final book seems even more gritty than the first two, taking on issues of infidelity, alcohol and drug abuse, and fractured family relationships, acknowledging that real families — even Christian families — deal with these problems. The main difference between Everson's work and secular fiction is that Everson's work is written from a Christian worldview rather than a politically correct secular one.

"Slow Moon Rising" may not be a mindless beach read, but it is entertaining. Riveting, even. And thought-provoking. And real.

Christian Marketplace

Top Ten Best Sellers

Fiction

1. The Harbinger, Jonathan Cahn (Charisma)
2. Tattered Quilt: The Return of the Half-Stitched Amish Quilting Club, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
3. A Vow for Always, Discovery Series #6, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
4. Rosemary Cottage, Hope Beach Series #2, Colleen Coble (Thomas Nelson)
5. Home Run, Travis Thrasher (David C Cook)
6. The Living Room, Robert Whitlow (Thomas Nelson)
7. A Revelation in Autumn, Discovery Series #5, Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
8. The Letters, Inn at Eagle Hill Series #1, Suzanne Woods Fisher (Baker)
9. The Guardian, Home to Hickory Hollow Series #3, Beverly Lewis (Baker)
10. The Outcast, Jolina Petersheim (Tyndale)

Youth

1. The Action Bible, Sergio Cariello (David C Cook)
2. The Beginner's Bible, Kelly Pulley (Zondervan)
3. Game Changer, Kirk Cousins and Ted Kluck (Zondervan)
4. The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zondervan)
5. Jesus Calling, 365 Devotions for Kids, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. Jesus Calling Bible Storybook, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
7. Jesus Calling — Teen Edition, Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
8. So Long, Insecurity: Teen Edition, Beth Moore and Susan Weibel (Tyndale)
9. Read and Share Bible, Gwen Ellis (Thomas Nelson)
10. Heaven Is for Real for Kids, Todd Burpo (Thomas Nelson)



Metro Toronto: 6 million people
Immigrant population: 52 percent

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'Heartbeat for the nations'

NAMB scholarship provides funds for trips to unreached peoples

Church planter Randall Edwards not only had the 6 million people of metro Toronto in mind when he moved to the city seven months ago. With immigrants comprising 52 percent of the population, he had the whole world in mind.

"We came here with the mindset of going global," Edwards said. "Toronto is the most multicultural city in the world and one of the most strategic places in the West to reach unreached people groups. We want to see them come to Christ here."

The church plant, although not officially launched, already has involved a variety of immigrants, Edwards said. With the hope of mobilizing his church plant to help penetrate lostness among an unreached people group in North Africa, Edwards and his wife Amanda participated in a June vision trip to the continent through the International Mission Board (IMB).

More people from that unreached people group live in Toronto than any other city in the world outside of Africa, Edwards said. He envisions not only mobilizing his church for onsite ministry in Africa among the people group but also strengthening the church plant's own ministry among the group back in Toronto.

Vision trips for church planters

Edwards took the trip with the help of scholarship funds from the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Southern Baptist church planters who are members of the Send North America Support Network are eligible for up to \$3,000 to purchase plane tickets for a planter and a spouse or another team member to take a vision trip to minister to an unreached people group. NAMB makes the funds available to the planter when his church adopts a people group through IMB and receives the appropriate training.

"We believe these trips will help church planters gain a Kingdom mindset, a vision greater than just the city where they are planting," said Micah Millican, NAMB's director of church planter relations. "As they develop a heartbeat for the nations, they'll

lead their congregations into a global perspective on missions."

NAMB leaders hope the effort will encourage church planters to engage the 3,100 unreached people groups currently not being engaged with the gospel by any church or missions organization. So far, nearly 100 church planters have identified a people group and are going through the process of adopting and engaging the group with the help of NAMB and IMB.

Global Christians

"Jesus never intended for the Great Commission to be sequential, that we start in Jerusalem and then once that's accomplished we then turn our attention to the rest of the world," said Ken Winter, IMB vice president of church and partner services. "He intended that we live out every day as global Christians, making disciples of all peoples. We are grateful for this partnership with NAMB to introduce the challenge of reaching the unreached into the DNA of new churches from the very beginning."

Edwards expects his recent trip will have a DNA-building influence on his church as he takes what he learned and begins to mobilize his church's involvement among the people group.

"We have a global city in Toronto, but that doesn't necessarily mean the people here have a global missions mindset, and that's the key," Edwards said. "The global nature of the city means that it's a great launching point to the world."

Even though he grew up traveling the world and lives in one of the most international cities on earth, Edwards says his recent trip brought many new realizations.

"Just seeing the work of God in a different region of the world impacted me greatly," Edwards said. "It gave me a renewed vision for what we are doing here. It put it in perspective. You can get so myopic that you forget that God is working in different ways all around the world. I got to see work being done that was completely distinct from what I had ever seen before."

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

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian woman killed, boy kidnapped in Somalia

BELEDWEYNE, Somalia — Islamic extremists from the Al Shabaab rebel group are suspected of killing a Christian woman in one town in early September and kidnapping a 13-year-old boy from another, sources said.

The militants, who have vowed to rid Somalia of its underground church, are suspected of killing Fatuma Isak Elmi, 35, on Sept. 1 at about 7:30 p.m. inside her home in Beledweyne, Hiran Province in south-central Somalia. Her husband had received a threatening note that morning believed to be from the Islamic extremist group and was away at the time of the murder.

Neighbors were alerted to the killing when they heard Elmi's 4-year-old son crying.

"The neighbors heard a child crying for quite some time," a source said. "After one hour, a close neighbor visited the house and found the child outside still crying."

The neighbor, whose identity is withheld for security reasons, told the source that upon entering the house she found Elmi dead.

Elmi's husband, 36-year-old Mumin Omar Abdi, learned of her death when he arrived home at about 10 p.m. He said he had found a note early that morning that read, "We shall come for you. You are friends with our enemies [Westerners, assumed to be Christians], and you are polluting our religion."

Abdi has fled the area with his son to an undisclosed location, the source said.

Armed Muslims kill Christians in their homes

ADU, Nigeria — Gabriel Anthony, 25, was steeped in quiet, prayerful devotion Sept. 1 in his northern Nigerian village when he heard gunshots.

"Within minutes, bullets were piercing into our rooms," Anthony said. "I escaped from my room by jumping through the window."

A half hour later, seven of his relatives in Adu village, Kaduna state, were dead, including his father, 60-year-old Anthony Nkom; his mother, 45-year-old Asabe Anthony; his brother, 35-year-old James Anthony; and another brother, 37-year-old Andrew Anthony. Also killed were three of his nephews: 5-year-old Meshack Aaron, 12-year-old Bulus James Anthony and 15-year-old Happiness Anthony.

The bodies of Happiness and Meshack were buried in one grave, and those of the other five in another.

Two other Christians in the village were killed and three were wounded in the attack by more than a dozen ethnic Fulani Muslims, Anthony said. All of those killed were members of St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Adu.

As Anthony's relatives were being shot, in another part of Adu village another set of Muslim Fulani gunmen attacked the house of Joseph Abwoi, 50, killing him and his wife, Asabat Abwoi, 40. They were buried in a single grave.

Widow beaten, house destroyed by Hindu extremists

KONDAGOAN, India — When Laxmi Sovi, a Christian widow in India's Chhattisgarh state, heard her door opening one morning in August, she could not have guessed that by the next day she would be hospitalized and her home demolished.

Three Hindu extremists identified only as Veeru, Chaytu and Mangru barged into Sovi's house in Kakadi Beda village, Kondagoan, at 9:30 a.m. Aug. 24 and demanded that she and her children convert back to Hinduism.

In spite of threats, she declined and the men left. That night at around 11 p.m., the same Hindu nationalists forced their way into her house. "They asked me why I converted to Christianity and left all the Hindu idols, and they also told me that I should reconvert to Hinduism or else be killed," Sovi said.

Sovi, who became a Christian in 2009, refused to renounce Christ. The Hindu extremists began beating her and her two children. The children managed to escape and hid in the surrounding jungle, but the men continued to slap, kick and punch Sovi as they insisted she leave Christ.

She also took refuge in the jungle — where she hid for the rest of the night — with a fractured left hand, swelling on her neck and multiple contusions. The next morning, Sovi returned home with area Christian leaders to find her house demolished.