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Most Americans enjoy hearing Christmas songs during holiday season

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Samford student Diana Campbell makes microfilm copies of church records. When she's finished, the originals will be returned to the church.



Samford's Special Collection serves as the repository for many old originals too, like these from Ruhama Baptist.

More *MUSEUM* than file cabinet

Samford's Special Collection helps Baptists remember what God has done

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

A student from a state university sits at a table, yellowing papers spread out all around him. The place where he sits is full of sermons from Alabama Baptist pastors. Sermons from pastors of other denominations. A Charles Spurgeon sermon with Spurgeon's own handwritten notations.

The student "has come here to see what preachers were preaching" in past decades, explained Elizabeth Wells, processing archivist and Special Collection librarian at Samford University in Birmingham.

He's doing what the ministry of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC) is all about — he's remembering, said Lonette Berg, ABHC executive director.

"It's hard to 'go and tell' if we don't know anything about where we've been and what God has brought us through," Berg said, noting how God told the Israelites to remember what He had done for them and pass it on to the generations to come.

The Special Collection is a good place for remembering, she said — much more of a museum than a "file cabinet."

Visitors can take a tour to see things from basins used to wash feet to potbellied stoves used for heating baptistries to oil portraits of early Baptist heroes of the faith. The history of faith and missions comes alive as longtime archivists display items and tell stories.

The collection also is the only repository for past editions of *The Alabama Baptist*.

And if a pastor went to Samford,



TAB photos
Samford archivists Elizabeth Wells (right) and Jennifer Taylor tell stories of people who walked miles and packed food for the day to attend revivals.

church members can see his old school pictures, said Jennifer Taylor, chair of the Special Collection.

Alabama Baptists have long been at the top in giving and going, but that's "not by accident," Berg said. "Alabama Baptists have been educated in what God can do."

But it's hard to keep that legacy going if the record of what He's done accidentally ends up at the bottom of a creek, in a landfill, burned up by a fire or carried away by a tornado, she said.

It's never intentional, but it happens all the time, Berg said.

A safe stolen — twice

Take Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, Kinston, for example.

Burglars stole the church safe, which was full of old records, but later dumped it on the riverbank, where it was found. The church brought it back and got a new safe they could bolt to the floor, but a second set of robbers ripped it up.

When Pilgrim's Rest found the safe again, they called Berg immedi-

ately, and she had the records in the microfilm lab that week.

Microfilming is "something we offer at no charge, and it preserves the story of what God has done and what He's doing," she said.

Berg drives all over Alabama to pick up the records of churches, bring them back to Samford to be copied to microfilm, then deliver them safely back to the church.

"We are very, very careful with those records," she said.

As she recently picked up one set of records, Berg told the church clerk that she would take care of the records as if they were the only photo Berg owned of her daughter.

"We take excellent care," she said.

Once they're microfilmed and back in the church's possession, the microfilmed copies are stored in Samford's Special Collection located in the university library.

"They are much more accessible for people to view there than they are in a church safe," said Kimmetha Herndon, library dean.

(See 'Collection,' page 11)

COMMENT

‘Reputation Is Everything’

The girl was only 4 years old. She was lured from her parents by a man in his mid-20s and raped. The damage to her tiny body was terrible but not as terrible as what happened next. When the child’s parents found their daughter they did not call for medical help. Instead they abandoned her. Others in the community also turned a blind eye to the child, and the girl slowly bled to death lying alone at the site of the tragedy.

The reason for such brazenness? According to James Emery, author of a research article titled “Reputation is Everything,” the family and community felt the child’s misfortune would sully the family’s honor. Leaving the child alone to bleed to death was deemed an honor killing.

Honor killings are generally defined as murders of women by relatives who claim the victims brought shame to the family.

Afaf Younes was 17. Allegedly there was a pattern of sexual abuse by her father. Afaf ran away from home to get away from him. She was caught and returned to her father who then shot her in the name of honor. No one protested.

A 16-year-old Palestinian girl became pregnant after being raped by her younger brother. Once her condition became known, her family encouraged the older brother to kill her to remove the blemish (an out of wedlock pregnancy) from their honor. Both brothers — the rapist and the murderer — were exonerated. The girl was blamed.

An 18-year-old Palestinian man stabbed his teenage sister 40 times just because of a rumor she was involved in an extramarital affair. The family thanked God for her death.

Emery concluded “several thousand women a year are victims of honor killings.” Women are treated as commodities in these places. They are responsible for maintaining their moral and sexual purity. If they fail, for whatever reason, their “shame” is extended to the entire family and can be eliminated only by their death.

Honor killings usually occur in communities where reputation is everything, experts say. Frequently families will spend their entire lives in the same community. Mention a family name



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

and people can tell you its complete history. Reputation and honor are the most important possessions one has whether one is wealthy or poor.

Most honor killings involve Muslims although the practice, Emery says, predates the founding of the religion and the Quran does not teach honor killings. “Some Jewish communities from the ancient fortress of Masada to conservative Hasidic sects of today have similar views of traditions and ritual law,” he writes.

‘Honor killing’

When Emery writes, “Women are executed in their homes, in open fields and occasionally in public, sometimes before crowds of cheering onlookers,” one can easily draw parallels with John 8:1–11, where the Pharisees wanted to publicly stone a woman taken in adultery. Had the stoning taken place, it would have been an “honor killing” before a crowd of cheering onlookers.

Deuteronomy 22:20 demands the killing of a girl whose virginity cannot be proven. In verse 21, a girl who engaged in premarital sex was to be stoned to death by the men of the town. The purpose of the killings, one reads over and over again, is to “purge the evil” from the community.

It is important to remember that like many people groups in that part of the world, Israel had its own forms of honor killings deeply embedded in its history, traditions and practices. That reality causes one to read the Christmas story with a new sense of appreciation.

In Luke 1:26–38, the angel Gabriel appeared to a teenage Mary in the town of Nazareth. He was a stranger. Whether the angel appeared in her room in the middle of the night or at the well where she went to draw water, it was dangerous for her to be alone with Gabriel. No wonder she was troubled by his greeting.

After hearing that she would bear a son, one can hear the shock in her words, “How can this be?” One can almost hear the fear as she adds, “I am a virgin.” To hear the exchange between Gabriel and Mary as only an intellectual explanation of what is about to happen misses the human drama and fails to grasp the depth of dedication demonstrated by Mary.

While Nazareth was a small, out-of-the-way village resting atop a hillside, Sephora was a large regional Roman city in the valley about an hour’s walk away. It was a regional military post, one of the Decapolis cities complete with all of Rome’s vices.

Mary knew what happened to other girls who had gotten pregnant outside of marriage. She may have known about honor killings in her own community. She may have even witnessed them. So when the angel told her of the coming child, it is no wonder she protested that the foretelling could not be true. If what Gabriel said were true, it could cost her her life. She might join the list of honor killing victims stoned by the men of the town.

Against the fears of physical death, Gabriel told of the greatest longing of a Jewish heart becoming a reality. The Messiah would be born and Mary would be the human instrument of the child’s coming.

That day in Nazareth, hope defeated fear. In faith, Mary resolved, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said.” Mary invited the shame and disgrace that would come when villagers learned she was pregnant. She made her family subject to humiliation because of the conclusions people would reach about her actions. She risked being stoned to death in an honor killing all because of the promise shared by the angel — “so the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.”

In the years that followed many people would suffer physical death because of their faith in Mary’s Child. People still die today because of Him. But these have the promise that “as God raised Jesus from the dead, so shall you also be raised.” Mary faced the possibility of death before Jesus was born. Her promise was about what was yet to be.

“May it be to me as you have said” — what a remarkable reputation that statement makes. What a wonderful faith it shows. It is a faith to be remembered and a faith to be celebrated as we prepare to commemorate Christ’s birth this Christmas season.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

NO SUN, NO LIFE?

Pastor Eric House began his article titled “Want to Know God?” (in the Nov. 21 issue) with this statement: “Scientists will tell you that all life on earth requires light provided by the sun.” Unfortunately that statement is inaccurate.

The National Science Foundation notes that “Scientists once thought

sunlight, like water, was crucial to sustain life on Earth. But we now know of deep-sea communities of organisms that use chemical energy, rather than energy from sunlight, as the basis for their food.” More complete and very interesting information on this topic can be found at www.nsf.gov/news/overviews/earth-enviro/earth_q04.jsp.

And consider septic tanks. They are

completely devoid of sunlight, yet they are alive with a gazillion bacteria and other microscopic organisms that happily devour and convert wastewater. However, all the material these organisms consume (See ‘Letters,’ page 11)





THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Volunteers work on a construction project at Stoney Creek Camp in Vinemont. Randy Hinkle, camp founder and president, says volunteers sent his way by NAMB's Volunteer Opportunities map have met the camp's 'need for survival.'

Meet the need



Photo courtesy of Stoney Creek Camp

NAMB online map connects missions needs with volunteers

It's a "need for survival," and it's being met in a surprising way, Randy Hinkle said.

Hinkle, founder and president of Stoney Creek Camp, said there's "no way four people could've accomplished the task already completed without God and hundreds of workers."

People would be "shocked," Hinkle said, "at how many volunteers have come to the camp in the past four years."

Somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000, he estimates, most of which came through a Volunteer Opportunities map created by the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

The map, found at namb.net/volunteer-opportunities, connects volunteers and needs nationwide. Currently 19 Alabama job requests are posted, one of which is at Stoney Creek Camp, an outreach ministry connected with Stoney Creek Baptist Church, Vinemont.

"We continually have needs for cleaning after groups leave, yard and building maintenance, firewood for winter groups and our big need is a gym facility so we can keep bookings

year round," Hinkle said. With multiple teams coming, he said he thinks the camp can have a gym built "one week at a time" over the period of a year or two.

"One group could do one small item, which in the grand scheme of things would be a big help," Hinkle said. "God has always sent the people we needed at the perfect time."

Useful tool

NAMB created the Volunteer Opportunities map to be a useful tool for both churches in need and teams looking for ways to serve. As pastors, church planters and ministry leaders identify areas of their ministry or in their community where they could use some extra help, they can simply go online and submit their need on the map.

The site allows them to be as specific as they want, including details like a summary of the project, how many teams are needed to serve, the duration of the project and more.

Then as churches throughout North America begin praying and planning for upcoming short-term missions opportunities for their congregations, they can go online and search the site for needs their team might be able to meet. The map is customized by region, with each need represented by a dot on the map. Those searching for opportunities can go online, view the needs available, pray through these opportunities and easily connect with a place to serve.

"The map has made connecting churches and volunteers as simple as one click," explained Susan Peugh, volunteer opportunities

coordinator for NAMB. "We hope that by simplifying the connection process for both churches in need and volunteer teams looking for needs to meet, we'll see more and more connections made and partnerships formed between churches."

There are already more than 300 needs posted to the map and more are on the way.

Steve Tipton, manager of Coffee Baptist Association's camp The Vineyard, said partnerships are key for the camp's ministry.

"Our need here for volunteers is great," he said. "Nearly everything we have done or built here has been done by volunteers."

The NAMB website has helped tremendously in recruiting help for The Vineyard, Tipton said.

"It really kicked off our being able to reach some missions-minded partners," he said.

Chris Terrell, director of Renovation Ministries in Anniston, said he is new to the map but hopes it "serves as a wonderful tool that matches us up with youth groups across the nation and state looking for a positive, kid-based evangelistic ministry that is really making a difference in our city."

Moving into 2014, the map will expand as new needs are posted and churches begin planning their short-term trips for spring and summer breaks. Additionally NAMB hopes to see the tool utilized as a part of Crossover 2014 in Baltimore prior to the Southern Baptist Convention hosted by the city.

For more information or to view the Volunteer Opportunities map, visit namb.net/volunteer-opportunities. (NAMB, TAB)



Photo courtesy of Stoney Creek Camp

A group of construction volunteers raise a wall on a building at Stoney Creek Camp in Vinemont.

"We hope that by simplifying the connection process for both churches in need and volunteer teams looking for needs to meet, we'll see more and more connections made and partnerships formed between churches."

Susan Peugh
volunteer opportunities coordinator, North American Mission Board



Photo courtesy of Molly Anne Dutton

Auburn University senior Molly Anne Dutton (center, left) was named Miss Homecoming on Oct. 12. She is being escorted by her mother, Peggy Dutton.

'Light Up LIFE'

Auburn homecoming queen shares how God is light in darkness

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Even though a circumstance looks and feels so dark, God not only provides light, but He is the light Himself," said Molly Anne Dutton, Auburn University's recently named homecoming queen.

Dutton's birth mother was a young married woman living in California who, through a series of events, found herself the victim of sexual assault.

After realizing she was pregnant, she approached her husband and was presented with an ultimatum — either abort the child or get a divorce. Choosing life, Dutton's birth mother moved to Birmingham where she discovered Lifeline Children's Services and received counseling, along with confirmation that adoption was the best option for herself and her child.

Dutton was adopted by Peggy Dutton and her then-husband, who at the time were serving on Lifeline's board. Molly Anne Dutton was raised in Gardendale where she grew up within Gardendale First Baptist Church's youth ministry under student pastor Jamin Grubbs.

At the feet of Christ

The youth group "traveled to a beach retreat where the Lord showed me His compassion, purpose and love in Hebrews 2:9-11," she noted of her faith journey. "Those verses [led] me humbly to the feet of Christ where I called Him Savior and King of my life."

Now a 22-year-old senior studying horticulture at Auburn and a member of the Church of the Highlands Auburn campus, Molly Anne Dutton said never in her wildest dreams did she imagine God taking her story outside of Auburn's city limits.

During the development stages of what came to be known as her "Light Up LIFE" homecoming campaign, she sat with her campaign staff in a planning meeting and tossed around slogan ideas. "We tried to think of words that described my story," she said, adding they soon decided on the slogan "Light Up LIFE."

"Some people could focus [on] the hardship of my

birth, but God provides light in the darkness. That is exactly what we wanted to focus on. That saving hope is the reason why... I live for Him," she said.

When Auburn's homecoming day arrived Oct. 12, she was accompanied on Pat Dye Field in Jordan-Hare Stadium by her adoptive mother, Peggy Dutton. When Molly Anne Dutton's name was announced as the university's 100th homecoming queen, both women cried together.

"I was full of gratitude that I just leaked happiness and relief," Molly Anne Dutton noted. "God gave us every ounce of strength during that time and He proved so faithful. God isn't good because of the blessing He pours out on us, He is good because He is God."

Since being named Miss Homecoming, her world has looked a bit different as her story and message of life has spread across the U.S., requiring her to balance both schoolwork and a multitude of media requests. But through it all she believes her story has touched many hearts, as evidenced by conversations, emails and messages.

Grubbs noted that Molly Anne Dutton has an incredible story. "But when you think about it, many people have incredible stories and have been faced with circumstances that seem overwhelming," he noted. "I believe what makes Molly's situation unique is that she is far more concerned with 'HIS story' than her own. I believe she has been living her campaign slogan 'Light Up LIFE' long before she ever thought about it. When I think of Molly, I think about Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:14-16. Molly has simply been faithful to shine her light before men so that her heavenly Father can be glorified."

Now a couple months into her title as Miss Homecoming, Molly Anne Dutton said she is reminded that the story she has shared with the nation isn't about her. "This story might have me as a character, but God is the author and perfecter of the story written within my life," she said. "I am so humbled to be used in what He wants to tell America."

She added, "That Saturday in Jordan-Hare (Stadium) I thought the journey had finished; however, God was just beginning." ❧

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Islamic extremists kill at least 71 Christians in Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria — Suspected Muslim herdsmen slaughtered 37 Christians in Nigeria in coordinated attacks on four Plateau state villages Nov. 26 after Boko Haram terrorists killed at least 34 Christians in Borno state earlier in November, sources said.

The Miyetti Allah cattle-rearing association reportedly denied that Fulani herdsmen were responsible for attacking the villages. Most mainstream media mentioned vague accusations of cattle theft or unsupported statements of political and land disputes as possible motivations for the attacks, although in recent months Muslim Fulani herdsmen have increased the unprovoked slaughter of unarmed Christians in their homes that has taken place for several years in Plateau state.

Christian leaders otherwise at a loss to explain the increase in attacks believe Islamic extremist groups are inciting the attacks. Hit-and-run, guerrilla-style attacks on Christian villages in which children are shot to death as they sleep support their suspicion that the assaults are motivated by a desire to eliminate Christianity.

The slaughters come after members of the Islamic extremist Boko Haram group in Borno state killed at least 26 Christians Nov. 11-13 and eight others Nov. 3 in Nigeria's northeast. Boko Haram has attacked religious, governmental and police centers in its campaign to impose a strict version of sharia (Islamic law) throughout Nigeria.

Israel orders deportation of Jews for Jesus worker

CAIRO — An Israeli immigration judge has ordered the deportation of a Messianic Jewish man from England who was arrested Nov. 20 for taking part in an evangelistic event in southern Israel.

Barry Barnett, 50, a worker with Jews for Jesus UK, was ordered to leave the country by Dec. 3. Barnett, who is based in England, was volunteering at the Jews for Jesus "Behold your God Israel" campaign around the city of Be'er Shiva when he was arrested.

According to his wife, Alison Barnett, he was taken to an immigration-holding unit of a prison in Ramle, near Tel Aviv. He spent four days in jail before his court hearing.

The team present at the time of the arrest was made up of Israeli citizens except for Barry Barnett.

According to Dan Sered, Israel director for Jews for Jesus, the presiding judge ruled that Barry Barnett was not allowed to engage in "missionary activity" while in Israel because he was engaging in missionary activity and not regular tourist activity on a B2 tourist visa.

"But the global ethics code for tourism, which the state of Israel signed and even advertises on its own Ministry of Tourism Web page, states that tourism for the purpose of exchanging religious beliefs is not only valid but also should be encouraged," Sered said.

Kazakh police, journalists raid Baptist worship service

URALS, Kazakhstan — Up to 16 police officers and journalists — led by the local religious affairs official — raided the Nov. 10 worship service of Baptists in Oral (Uralsk) in West Kazakhstan Region. Ten of those present face possible fines of one or two months' average salary for meeting for worship without state permission. One of the Baptists, Kenzhetai Baytinov, may have been removed from his job under state pressure. ❧

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

Email your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org; fax it to 205-870-8957 or call 1-800-803-5201, Ext. 112. Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



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IMB photo

Burmese immigrant workers sort fish at a large fish market in Ranong, Thailand. The Brandings work with the immigrants and meet their physical needs through water filtration projects.

Power of Jesus Christ

Southern Baptist workers offer hope, 'living water' to Burmese immigrants in Thailand

It rains eight months out of the year in the Thai province Scott and Alyssa Branding call home. For many of the country's 2.5 million Burmese living in the southern part of Thailand, monsoon rain is their only dependable water source. But drinking the rainwater can make them sick.

So the Brandings give them clay water pots lined with rice husks to filter impurities from the rain. Then they tell them about Jesus, the source of "living water."

The Brandings have been sharing the gospel with Burmese migrant workers for more than 10 years. Many of these mi-

grant workers live in remote areas without electricity or running water. They work on rubber and palm oil plantations or are undocumented immigrants living in the jungle to avoid detection by local immigration police.

Spirit houses

Families there build spirit houses in their yards, setting out food every day to appease spirits — even when there is not enough food left to feed their families.

Fear of angering spirits is so deep-seated that new Christians often do not immediately throw out their idols.

"When we go into a home and we see

their altar being totally clean, we just praise God because we know they've made that final step, they have totally committed their whole selves to the Lord," Alyssa Branding said.

When a small group of believers formed among the plantation workers, one of the first things they prayed for was time each week to meet together, said the congregation's pastor Ye Htoelt. With no means of transportation, walking 10 kilometers (six-plus miles) or more to another plantation can take more than an hour each way.

Htoelt's hands are cracked and calloused from years of working on palm oil plantations. On the first plantation Htoelt worked in Thailand, there had been running water and electricity, but the landowner was "wicked" and over-worked his employees, Htoelt recalls.

He and his wife eventually found work at a different plantation. It didn't have running water or electricity, but the landowner was a believer.

Not only did he give the couple Sundays off from work, he sent Htoelt home every Saturday afternoon so he could prepare to teach his small congregation the following day.

Htoelt was unsure he had the ability to lead the congregation, so Scott Branding mentored him for two years.

"[It is] such a joy now to see him be able to share the gospel and have confidence," Scott Branding said. "When he starts speaking about the Bible, it's just like he comes alive and he just explodes with power. ... it's because the power of Jesus Christ [is] in him."

The Brandings, who live in an area surrounded by fish processing plants, also have helped start Bible studies among factory workers. For WinWin Ma, a young woman who works in a squid processing plant, times of worship allow her to claim joy in life through Christ. She is the only Christian in her workroom.

"I work 10 hours a day and sometimes face problems at work," she said. "But when I worship, the worry and stress fall away. I feel joy."

The Brandings are serving in Thailand through Southern Baptists' gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and Cooperative Program, which fund the presence and missions outreach of nearly 5,000 Southern Baptist representatives internationally. For more information, visit imb.org/offering, where there are resources for church leaders to promote the offering.

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



IMB photo

Scott Branding (center) and a Burmese pastor meet with Burmese villagers at a rubber tree farm, teaching them how to properly use water filtration pots. Many of the Burmese cross into Thailand, finding work on plantations and fish markets.



IMB photo

A young Burmese mother reads a book to her children one afternoon at church.

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.

BULLOCK-CENTENNIAL

► **First Church, Union Springs**, was the Bullock County collection center for Operation Christmas Child (OCC) shoeboxes. A record 478 shoebox gifts were received. The other churches and groups participating were: Union Springs Presbyterian Church; Inverness Church, Union Springs; Mount Sinai Church, Horton; Fort Davis United Methodist Church; Midway Church; Eastside Church, Union Springs; Union Springs First United Methodist Church; Macedonia Church, Union Springs; Faith Independent Ladies Class; Bullock County Hospital; Oak Grove Missionary Church; Hopewell United Methodist Church, Valley; and Indian Creek Church, Banks. Bill Cannon is pastor of First, Union Springs.

CENTRAL

► **Rockford Church** sent a record 120 Operation Christmas Child (OCC) shoebox gifts in late November. This is a 400 percent increase from 2012. From the Coosa County community and surrounding areas that used their relay center, they will send more than 600 boxes to OCC, a 600

percent increase from 2012. Jeff Fuller is pastor.

CHEROKEE

► **Josh Prater** is the new pastor of **Providence Church, Centre**. He previously served as youth pastor for Slackland Church, Leesburg, for eight years. He and his wife, Jenifer, have two children.

COFFEE

► The **Goodman Church, Enterprise**, choir will present a cantata "Bethlehem Morning" on Dec. 22, 11 a.m. Everyone is invited. Bruce Williams is pastor. ► The **New Ebenezer Church, Elba**, choir will present a Christmas Cantata on Dec. 15, 5:30 p.m. Everyone is invited. Travis Johnson is pastor. ► **Park Avenue Church, Enterprise**, will hold "Christmas with the Emmaus Road Quartet" on Dec. 15, 11 a.m. Emmaus Road is a southern gospel quartet from Dalton, Ga., dedicated to sharing the ministry of Jesus Christ through song and worship. For information call the church at 334-347-8264 or visit the quartet's website, www.ERQMUSIC.com. Leon Adams is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Bay Springs Church, Do-**

than, will hold "The Light of Christmas" musical Dec. 15, 6 p.m. A nursery will be provided and a fellowship meal will follow. Everyone is invited. Scott E. Cox is pastor.

ETOWAH

► The **Twelfth Street Church, Rainbow City**, chancel choir will present "The Light of Christmas" on Dec. 15, 5 p.m. Craig Carlisle is pastor.

GENEVA

► **New Prospect Church, Hartford**, invites visitors to its "Breakfast Ministry" each Sunday morning at 9:15 with fellowship and food. Mitchell Boyd is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► The adult choir of **Riverview Church, Camden**, will present Beautiful Star of Bethlehem on Dec. 15, 6 p.m. Scott Armstrong is pastor.

SHELBY

► **North Shelby Church, Birmingham**, will present a Four Piano Christmas Concert with Choir on Dec. 21 and 22, 6 p.m. For information call 205-995-9056 or visit www.northshelbybaptist.org. Allan Murphy is pastor.

Shocco to host Bible Drill retreat in January

The state of Alabama may be best known in recent years for its football championships, but the state also is home to champions of God's Word.

Three Alabama Baptist students — Leslie Hayes, High School Bible Drill, Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford; Sienna Borowski, High School Bible Drill, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile; and Rachel Sinclair, Speaker, Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham — placed at National Invitational Bible Drill Tournaments in 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively.

As children and students across the state practice for the tournaments, they are hiding God's Word in their hearts. They are memorizing verses, locating key passages,

learning how to share the steps of salvation and identifying doctrinal Scriptures. These skills help them appreciate God's Word and apply it in their daily lives.

Next on the agenda for Bible drillers in Alabama is the Go for the Gold Bible Drill Retreat at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega in January.

Time of worship

Along with presentations by Bible Drill leaders from across the state, Kyle Matthews, an award-winning recording artist and songwriter, will lead worship with musical and storytelling presentations.

The retreat is an annual highlight for drillers, said Renee Pate, minister of childhood education at Lake-

side Baptist. The students "love going to Shocco and meeting drillers from all over the state," she said.

The retreat also provides an opportunity for Bible drillers to practice for the spring drills.

"Drillers that attend the retreat are well prepared for Bible Drill," Pate added.

Taylor Oswald, an eighth grader from Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, has participated in Bible Drill for four years and has attended the retreat each of those years.

"I like to be at the retreat to learn new things about the Bible, to make new friends and see my old friends from previous years," she said.

For more information, visit www.alsbom.org/bibledrill. (SBOM)

BHS initiative named health care superstar by IHCC

Baptist Health System's (BHS) Worksite Wellness initiative has been selected as a 2013 Health-Care Consumerism Superstar by the Institute for HealthCare Consumerism (IHCC). The BHS program, which received the IHCC's "Most Effective Population Health Management" award, has utilized tools provided by Aegis Health Group since 2008.

According to the IHCC, the 2013 population health manage-

ment award winners "have designed next-generation wellness programs that eschew the one-size-fits-all mantra."

The BHS internal wellness program initially was launched as a way to mitigate escalating health care costs for its employees. BHS has been able to engage 85 percent of its workforce and measurably reduce tobacco use, decrease body mass index and improve cholesterol and blood pressure, resulting

in a 40 percent reduction in primary diabetes claims and complications, among other positive results. Based on this success, BHS launched a Workforce Wellness program in 2008 for employers in several counties. BHS Workforce Wellness personnel conduct health screenings, make follow-up and even same day appointments, host flu shot clinics and provide on-site nurse practitioners in some locations. (BHS)

Someone You Should Know

By Rose Walker, Special to *The Alabama Baptist*

Elizabeth Forehand



FOREHAND

*Thomasville Baptist Church
Clarke Baptist Association*

FAVORITE SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23

FAVORITE HYMNS: "Amazing Grace," "Because He Lives" and "God Is So Good"

HOBBIES: Flower gardening, playing bridge and dominoes, sewing and traveling

FAMILY STATUS: Widowed after 60 years of marriage to deacon James (Jim) Audley; two children: Marcia (deceased) and Judy; four living grandsons and one deceased grandson; eight great-grandchildren

Elizabeth Forehand turned 99 on Nov. 27, having lived through WWI, WWII and the Depression. She said she even remembers the sinking of the Titanic. She served many years at Thomasville Baptist Church as a children's Sunday School teacher at primary, junior and intermediate levels. She also sang in the choir and served as a loyal deacon's wife. Although she experienced a stroke last spring and has been unable to be involved in church, Forehand is still very active and sharp, and even still drives some. Each year, her family celebrates her birthday along with Thanksgiving. This year her Sunday School class also honored her with a special birthday luncheon at David's Catfish in Thomasville on Nov. 7. They showered her with flowers, a birthday cake and numerous cards.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: By remaining active in church. By caring for me in my house so that I can remain in my home.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in the ministry of the church in the future?

A: I don't imagine I can do very much. But I am a Thanksgiving baby and will continue to be thankful and to pray.

Q: What difference will your faith make for you in the future?

A: This many years God has taken care of me and He will continue to. Anything related to evil was just never in my make-up. I've had a good life — blessed with good health. ... And I've been able to remain in my own home.

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

A: My Daddy. We've always had God in our lives. That's where you draw your strength.

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

A: I've known Jesus all my life. I was taught that He's the root of it all. Prayer brings peace quicker than anything else. ☩

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.



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

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Camden Baptist sees 106 decisions after My Hope

"Our initial response was awe," said Pastor Bob Weber of the 106 decisions made for Christ after participating in My Hope with Billy Graham in early November.

Weber, who has served as pastor of Camden Baptist Church for more than three years, explained how the Pine Barren Baptist Association church had "a real burden for students."

Church leadership contacted headmaster Chris Burford at Wilcox Academy, a private school located near the church. On Nov. 7, Burford agreed to allow a facilitator (volunteer) from Camden Baptist to enter every sixth through 12th grade class. Each classroom was shown the My Hope video "The Cross" and heard the personal testimony of each facilitator.

"It was beyond anything we could have imagined," Weber said of the response from students, also noting that two decisions by adults were made in "Matthew" homes.

In preparation for presenting My Hope in the area, Weber began to walk through the Book of Acts and focused his sermons on how to "galvanize ... prayer lives and to seek the Lord corporately and individually." Church members participated in 40 days of prayer for My Hope and two "Matthew" training sessions were provided for those who volunteered to be a part of the initiative.

The initiative had a "powerful effect on youth culture" in the area, he said. "That's the beauty of Billy Graham — he speaks cross-generationally."

Now the church is busy with "strategic, methodical, prayerful" follow-up after having a post-strategy meeting, outlining every grade that was reached with the gospel and assigning personalized follow-up with every student, Weber said.

Students who filled out decision cards were invited to Harvest Day on Nov. 10 at Camden with musical guest IMPACT of the University of Mobile. And according to Weber, four spontaneous baptisms took place at the worship gathering.

And as far as My Hope goes, "it hasn't stopped," Weber said. "We are looking for any ... opportunity" to share the gospel, he said. "There are still people (at the church) taking the DVD and sharing it." (Neisha Fuson)

Oakley inducted into Communication Hall of Fame

The University of Alabama recently inducted James W. "Jim" Oakley Jr. into its College of Communication and Information Sciences Hall of Fame.

Oakley, who was raised in Bibb County, worked at the family business, the *Centreville Press*, from a young age. While at the University of Alabama he served on the news bureau and worked as a staff photographer. He earned his bachelor's degree and became the publisher at the *Press* in 1972.

He has served in several roles throughout his lifetime including his current service on the board of directors for *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper. He also was president of the Alabama Press Association (1979-80) and served on the Alabama Commission of Higher Education (1971-85).

In 1984, Oakley was asked to teach journalism classes at the University of Alabama. He also was chairman of the university's Media Planning Board (1986-2003).

Oakley and his late wife, Shirley, have three children and eight grandchildren. He is a member of First Baptist Church, Centreville. (TAB)



OAKLEY



MANDELA

'Long walk to freedom'

Mandela remembered for courage, conviction, 'lack of bitterness'

Former South African President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's 'long walk to freedom' has ended. He died Dec. 5 at age 95 at home after months of declining health.

"All of us in the country must accept that Madiba (as Mandela was affectionately called) is now old," South African President Jacob Zuma had said when Mandela seemed near death this summer. "As he ages, his health will trouble him."

Mandela rarely discussed religion outside the arena of religious freedom, but a transcript on NelsonMandela.org quotes his comments on religion in a 2000 *Christian Science Monitor* interview.

"Religion has had a tremendous influence on my own life. You must remember that during our time — right from Grade 1 up to university — our education was provided by religious institutions. I was in [Christian] missionary schools," the transcript records Mandela as saying.

'Epitome of forgiveness'

"You have to have been in a South African jail under apartheid where you could see the cruelty of human beings to each other in its naked form. Again, religious institutions and their leaders gave us hope that one day we would return," Mandela said.

Nigeria native Adeniya Ojutiku, a Southern Baptist in the U.S. who fights for Christians and their livelihood in his homeland, described Mandela as "an epitome of forgiveness, kindness and love" who had "a dogged resolve for the pursuit of peace and justice."

"His extraordinary life story, witty sense of humor and lack of bitterness toward his former oppressors has ensured global appeal for his type of charismatic leadership," Ojutiku told Baptist Press.

"He rekindled hope in the humaneness and greatness of the black, colored and white races as he soared above the petty confines of party politics and prejudice," Ojutiku said.

Mandela was inaugurated in May 1994 as president of South Africa, the first black and the first leader democratically elected to the post, stepping down after one term as he had vowed. Mandela chronicled his life in his 1994 autobiography, "Long Walk to Freedom," published in several languages.

In addition to the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize he

Missionary's reflection

Growing up in the Deep South in the 1960s and early 1970s, a middle-class white girl ... I was aware of racial inequities in my world and the world in general. Struggling to understand civil rights ... I was drawn to those who spoke with eloquence and passion as they advocated for racial equality.

Mandela and the African National Congress ... were involved in the freedom struggles of many African countries, but ... their beloved South Africa continued in the stranglehold of the government-sanctioned oppression of apartheid.

(After his release from prison) he expertly navigated the turbulent times that characterized South Africa emerging from apartheid. I was as thrilled as my national friends when he was elected as the first black president of South Africa in 1994.

In 2010, I was privileged to view an excellent display of the history of South Africa ... and I was drawn to one (Mandela) quote: "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. ... I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities." (BP)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Toni Braddix served in Africa for 20 years with the International Mission Board.

shared with former South African President F.W. deKlerk, who had joined hands with Mandela in defeating apartheid, some of Mandela's honors include *Time's* Person of the Year, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal, the Gandhi Peace Prize, the UNESCO Peace Prize, the Indira Gandhi Award for International Justice and Harmony and the Al-Gaddafi International Prize for Human Rights. (BP)



Photo courtesy of Wagarville Baptist Church

Wagarville provides Thanksgiving meal

The congregation of Wagarville Baptist Church in Washington Baptist Association treated people in the community to a traditional Thanksgiving meal in November. Church members cooked all the food, and local company BASF donated 17 turkeys. In less than two hours, more than 100 plates were served. Each box included a note for the recipient about God's love and extended an invitation to learn more about His gift of salvation. (TAB)

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The State Board of Missions joins with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in encouraging churches to give 1% more through the Cooperative Program.

If each Alabama Baptist church increased Cooperative Program gifts by 1/4% of undesignated receipts per year, we will meet the 1% Challenge in only four years. This is also a good way for a church to begin giving through the Cooperative Program.

During the 1% Challenge, we have seen a number of encouraging testimonies. In fact, during the first seven months of this year, 935 churches have increased their Cooperative Program giving over the same period in 2012.

Together we can do more to impact the Kingdom.

For information and resources about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.



Christmas music

Americans merry about hearing Christmas songs

In December, Christmas music is nearly inescapable and most Americans enjoy it.

According to a study by LifeWay Research, 70 percent of Americans enjoy hearing Christmas songs in December and 86 percent of people believe school choirs and bands should be allowed to perform religious Christmas music.

However, in the November 2012 online survey of 1,191 Americans, one in five Americans (21 percent) said the prevalence of Christmas music in December is “overdone” while 7 percent find it “annoying.”

LifeWay Research director Scott McConnell was impressed by the results considering how ubiquitous Christmas music is this time of year. “When seemingly everyone does something, it is sure to grate on someone’s nerves. But 10 times as many people find Christmas music everywhere enjoyable than find it annoying,” he said.

For those who enjoy Christmas music, religious identification and regular attendance at religious services were defining characteristics.

More than eight in 10 (83 percent) Americans who consider themselves to be a born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist

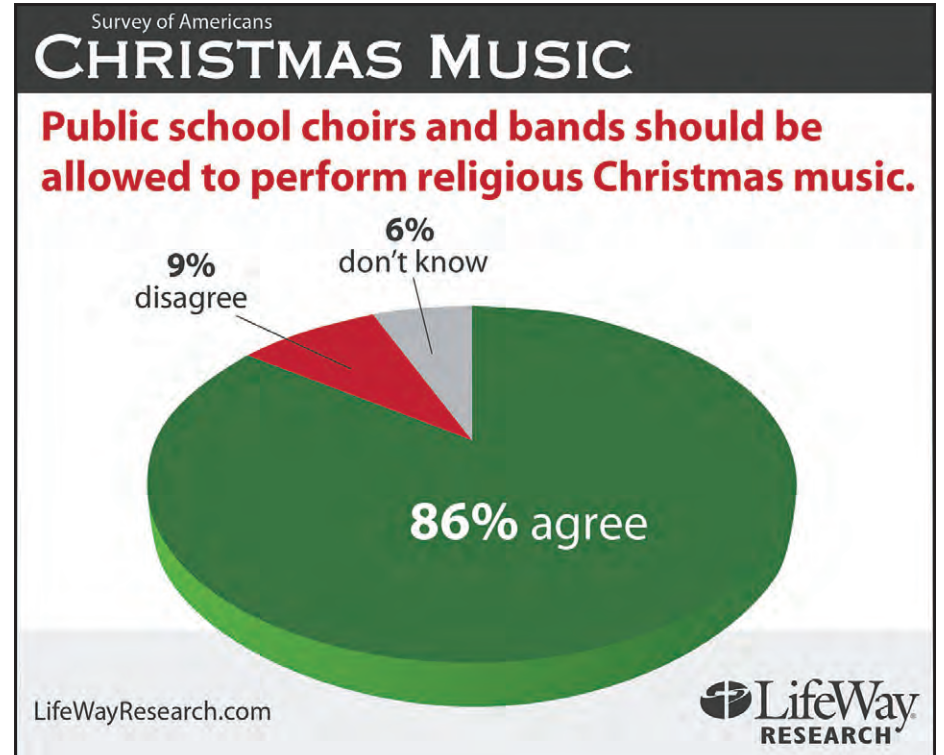
Christian said they find the prevalence of Christmas music enjoyable compared to 59 percent of those who “never” attend religious services.

When it comes to which type of Christmas music Americans prefer, 67 percent say they enjoy listening to “both secular and religious Christmas songs.” Eleven percent enjoy only “secular Christmas songs” as opposed to six percent who say they enjoy hearing songs only of a “religious” nature. One in 10 Americans say they prefer not to hear any Christmas music.

Music types overlap

Demographically, secular Christmas songs are more popular among Americans age 18–29 and those who never attend religious worship services. Twenty-two percent of 18- to 29-year-olds are most likely to say they enjoy secular Christmas songs and the least likely (50 percent) of all age groups to say they enjoy both secular and religious Christmas songs.

McConnell said secular traditions and religious observance often overlap for Americans at Christmas, but they appear to be “comfortable with this blend when it comes to Christmas music. Many Christmas songs



have long histories and are entrenched in December traditions.”

One of the times the two types of music come together is during performances by public school choirs and bands. A large majority of Americans (86 percent) agree that public school choirs and bands should be allowed to perform religious Christmas music. Only nine percent say religious Christmas music should not be performed by public school choirs and bands. Six percent said they don’t know.

Americans from the South (65 percent)

are more likely to say religious Christmas music should be allowed as compared to those in the West (57 percent).

Weekly attendees to religious services (76 percent) and Americans who call themselves a born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist Christian (88 percent) also are more likely to strongly agree that religious Christmas music should be allowed.

Age plays a factor with nearly three out of four Americans 55 years and over strongly agreeing as compared to 60 percent of those 30–44. (BP)

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Church charitable giving outpaces others

As the Christmas season approaches many people are in the mindset of giving. And according to the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability's (ECFA) Annual State of Giving Report released Dec. 4, more money was given in 2012 than was given in 2011 and not only that, but giving to evangelical churches and ministries outpaced giving to secular charities.

"As many American families experience economic challenges, church and nonprofit donors continue to demonstrate faithfulness in supporting God's work," said Dan Busby, ECFA president.

The report found that charitable giving to ECFA-accredited organizations (leading Christian nonprofits that maintain standards pertaining to financial accountability and fundraising) increased 6.4 percent between 2011 and 2012. It reflects total cash donations of \$11 billion in 2012, an increase from \$10.3 billion in 2011.

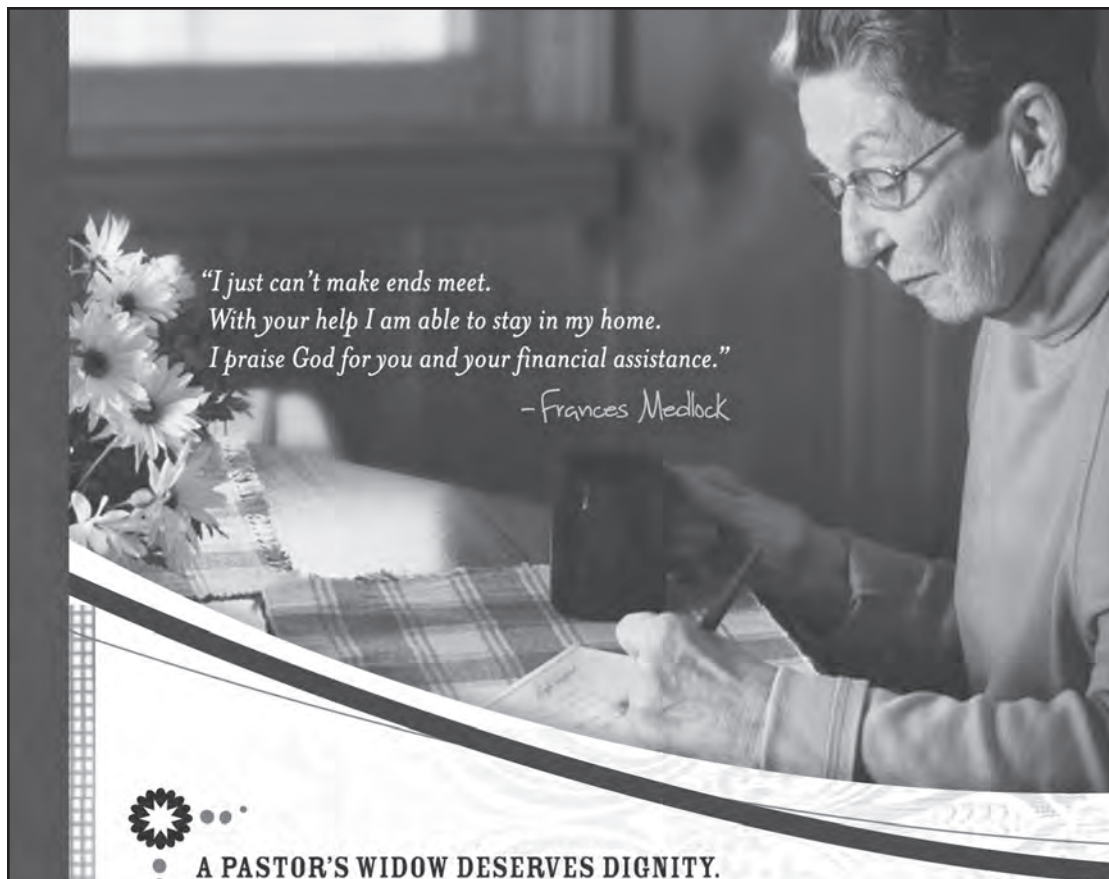
Total revenue increase

While the report focuses on cash giving, noncash giving also increased 4.8 percent in 2012 to \$3.4 billion. Total revenue increased 8.7 percent to \$21.4 billion for 2012.

The ECFA report breaks down more than \$14 billion of giving (\$11.0 cash/\$3.4 noncash) to members in segments including churches, rescue missions, missionary-sending ministries, colleges and universities and camps and conferences. The most significant cash giving increases occurred in the following categories: foundations, 25.1 percent; orphan care, 12.4 percent; adoption, 12.2 percent; K-12 schools, 12 percent; short-term missions, 12.1 percent; and higher education, 10 percent.

The report is based on the data of 1,634 ECFA members.

(InChrist Communications)



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I praise God for you and your financial assistance."
- Frances Medlock*



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CP giving at 94.15 percent of budget goal

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee are \$30,050,253.40 or 94.15 percent of the year-to-date SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget goal and are 1.75 percent below gifts received during the same time frame last year.

The year-to-date total represents money received by the Executive Committee by the close of the last business day of November and includes receipts from state conventions, churches and individuals for distribution.

The \$30,050,253.40 received by the Executive Committee from the start of the fiscal year, Oct. 1, through Nov. 30 for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget represents 94.15 percent of the \$31,916,666.67 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The total is \$535,768.28, or 1.75 percent less than the \$30,586,021.68 received through the end of November 2013.

Designated giving of \$36,957,899.34 for the same year-to-date period is 1.05 percent, or \$393,455.27, below the \$37,351,354.61 received at this point last year. This total includes only those gifts received and distributed by the Executive Committee and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, Southern Baptist Global Hunger Relief (formerly the World Hunger Fund) and other special gifts.

Pastors call 2nd prayer meeting for revival

ATLANTA — Building from a prayer gathering of senior pastors this fall in Dallas, a group of Southern Baptist pastors is inviting pastors, other ministers and ministry students to participate in a two-day prayer meeting Jan. 13-14 in Atlanta.

Labeled "A Call to Pray for Revival and Awakening," the gathering "is time for us to pray in an extraordinary way, to seek the God of heaven to revive His church and awaken our nation," said Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas.

Floyd, a primary organizer of a 42-member invitation team, announced the gathering on the meeting's website, praying-pastors.com. Information about the gathering at the Westin Atlanta Airport Hotel also is being disseminated via Twitter using the hashtag #prayingpastors.

There is no cost to attend the prayer gathering, but all attendees must register through the website and are responsible for their own travel and hotel costs.

The meeting will involve ministers who "are desperate for a move of God in our churches and in our nation," Floyd said. "They realize to penetrate their towns, cities and our nation, God will have to empower a mighty movement of revival in the church so we can see spiritual awakening in our nation."

CBF church disbands, donates facilities to SBC plant

BALTIMORE — A Cooperative Baptist Fellowship church in Baltimore has disbanded and is donating its facilities valued at \$2 million to a Southern Baptist church plant launched nearby five years ago. Patterson Park Baptist Church was constituted in 1913 in a neighborhood then bustling with row houses built to accommodate immigrant workers seeking jobs in waterfront factories, rail yards and wharves in the 1900s. Once thriving, the church had dwindled to 20 members.

Gallery Church will continue to meet at its downtown location near Baltimore's Inner Harbor Sundays at 9 a.m., followed by services at the Patterson Park "gathering community" at 11 a.m.

"These buildings, which have been very well maintained, will allow us space to worship and grow, expand our opportunities to love and teach children and offer permanent office space for our staff," Derek Miller, executive pastor at Gallery Church, said in a YouTube video announcing the acquisition in August.

Patterson Park worshipped for the last time as a congregation Oct. 20. The following Sunday there was a joint worship service with both Patterson Park and Gallery Church, which coincided with the 100th anniversary of Patterson Park's first recorded meeting on Oct. 29, 1913.

Want to know God?

By Pastor David Chambers
First Baptist Church, Fairview

Did you know that humans were originally created in the image of God? The first two chapters of the Bible tell us of the creation, including the creation of humans. Genesis 1:27 states that we were created “in the image of God.” Wow. We were created as a reflection of Him. We were modeled after Him. The original humans were perfect, sinless creatures that lived in a perfect world with no problems, sicknesses or ills of any type; however, in Genesis chapter three, that all changed.

God placed them in a garden full of delicious, wonderful things to eat. They could eat of any of the trees except one — the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We do not know how much time elapsed after their creation, but at some point Adam and Eve took of the fruit of the one tree that was forbidden them. God had given them the ability to choose whether or not to obey Him, and they chose to disobey — to sin. As a result, humans were removed from the garden and life became more difficult. The “image of God” was marred, and they were separated from God.

Since then, humans have sought to regain some semblance to the “image of God.” Physically we attempt to be strong and healthy. Emotionally we look for belonging and a sense of power or control of our circumstances. Spiritually we look to fill the void that is created by the absence of God in our lives.

Sadly many never think about looking to the One who is able to give us exactly what we need — God. If the “image of God” was and is marred by disobedience to God, then it stands to reason that only by obedience to God can His image be restored in us.

To be “in the image of God” follow the “Three Rs” of Acts 3:19: Repent (turn away from your sins). Receive forgiveness (blotting out) that is only offered in Christ. When you repent of your sins and receive the forgiveness of your sins through Christ, then you are refreshed (image restored) in the presence of the Lord.

Collection is ‘museum of Baptist missions,’ offers more than records

(continued from page 1)

And microfilmed records can last up to 500 years, Taylor said.

The collection is working to get some materials accessible digitally, such as with the Treasure Chest that’s updated regularly on the Special Collection website.

Right now the Treasure Chest features digital files of the Spurgeon sermon, among other things.

But archivists also are sensitive to the privacy of churches who may not want their records accessible online, Taylor said. For that reason, microfilm works well.

“And technology is so fluid — it changes quickly, and files can be lost or damaged,” she said.

First Baptist Church, Fayette, for example, is one church that has found good record keeping helpful in telling its story, Berg said.

They’ve made “an excellent church history display area,” she said, noting that it gives members greater access to their history.

And Baptists can access records or get help from archivists anytime the Special Collection is open — they can even take a tour.

For information about preserving church records or taking a tour, contact Berg at llberg@samford.edu or 205-726-2363. For information about the Special Collection, visit <http://library.samford.edu/about/special.html>.

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

does indeed come from organic matter generated initially in sunlight (plants that we eat, animals that we eat that first ate plants, etc.). I don’t want to get too graphic, but the sagacious reader will get the picture.

With all that being said, I think Pastor House’s article is a good one. Yet I could also see a couple of good sermons coming from the idea that there can be life without light. The question would be whether one wants to live like

giant tube worms and other blind scavengers on the deep ocean floor or live life in the light? And, of course, there are those who live in the septic tank of life devouring and enjoying the refuse that comes their way. Yep, I think some pastor could work on this angle.

Vic Payne
Environmental Engineer
Auburn, Ala.



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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Calhoun County, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Oak Bowery Baptist Church, 3300 AL Hwy 144, Ohatchee, AL 36271, or email to: oakbowerybaptist@att.net.

PASTOR: Church with great potential in the I-75 corridor between Chattanooga and Atlanta is seeking a pastor who loves people and wants to reach a community. The church is missions-minded, debt-free and desires growth through quality discipleship ministries. Please send resumés or inquiries to: Adairsville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 301, Adairsville, GA 30103.

PASTOR: Harmony Grove Baptist Church in Winfield, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Harmony Grove Pastor Search, P.O. Box 1432, Winfield, AL 35594, or harmonygrovebaptist@gmail.com.

FULL-TIME/BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Patsburg Baptist Church, located four miles NE of Luverne, Ala., is seeking a full-time/bivocational pastor. Small country church in need of a godly person to lead congregation and visit in community. Please send resumés to: Patsburg Pulpit Committee, P.O. Box 544, Luverne, AL 36049.

FULL-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: 5–10 years experience including: all age level choirs, instrumental, blended worship and a vision for future growth. Resumés to: West End Baptist Church, 2005 2nd Ave. N, Clanton, AL 35045.

WORSHIP MINISTER: Wilmer Baptist Church is searching for an experienced, spirit-filled individual to join us full-time as our worship minister. This individual will be responsible to lead contemporary worship service, choir and work with instrumentalists. For more details, visit www.wilmerchurch.com.

MUSIC LEADER: First Baptist Church, Foley, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music and senior adults. Worship style is blended. We are looking for a leader who is gifted in music and building a dynamic worship ministry. Minister will also oversee our senior adult ministries. Email resumés to: scollins@fbcfoley.com. Please include a video of you leading worship. Resumés will be accepted until Jan. 15.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Concord Baptist Church, Hueytown, Ala., is seeking a music minister to lead a blended service with both a choir and praise band. Send resumés to: concordbaptist@bham.rr.com.

STUDENT MINISTER: Cinco Baptist Church, located in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., is seeking a full-time student minister. College degree required. Seminary degree and ministry experience both a plus. Church website: www.cincobaptist.org. Submit resumés to: personnel@cincobc.org.

STUDENT MINISTER OF YOUTH/CHILDREN: New Hope Baptist Church in the Clarksdale community of Lauderdale County, Miss., is seeking God’s man for the full-time position of student minister of youth/children. Email resumés to: newhope145@gmail.com or mail to: NHBC Student Minister

Committee, 6573 Highway 145, Meridian, MS 39301. Deadline for submitting is Dec. 18.

OTHER POSITIONS

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Opening for a part-time financial secretary that will require 20–30 hours per week. Experience in accounting/bookkeeping and computer skills are needed. Qualified applicants are encouraged to send their resumés to: P.O. Box 823, Oneonta, AL 35121.

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Norman Rockwell’s ‘Grace’ sells for \$46 million

NEW YORK — Norman Rockwell, long America’s favorite mass-market painter, now has auction records to match his popularity. “Saying Grace,” one of his masterpieces, sold for \$46 million at auction Dec. 4 — a price three times higher than his previous record of \$15 million for his “Breaking Home Ties.”

Two other iconic paintings by Rockwell, who died in 1978, also sold that day, for a total of nearly \$12 million, according to The Associated Press. There’s no word yet on who bought the paintings.

It was “Grace” that drew all eyes at Sotheby’s in New York. It is an affecting image of a crowded restaurant with a little boy and a woman bowed in prayer at their table as other diners look on.

It’s one of the most memorable paintings by Rockwell, who produced more than 300 for the covers of the old *Saturday Evening Post* across a 40-year span. Published in 1951, the painting was voted a favorite cover by readers in 1955.

For nearly two decades, “Grace” had been on loan at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass., where Rockwell spent his last years.

Former Texas church staff member killed in Libya

BENGHAZI, Libya — A former staff member at The Austin Stone Community Church, Austin, Texas, was shot and killed in Benghazi, Libya, Dec. 5. Ronnie Smith, 33, had moved to Libya with his wife, Anita, and their son, Hosea, a year and a half ago to teach chemistry at the International School Benghazi and “be a blessing to the Libyan people,” according to a statement posted on the church website.

He was shot while out for a morning run just days before his planned return to the U.S. for the holidays. His wife and son had already returned to the U.S. — he had stayed behind “out of a sense of dedication” to be with his students during their midterm exams.

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December 17-19

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SALT Strategic Answers to Life's Thoughts

Apologetics conference set for January in Montgomery deals with tough questions

From abortion to the resurrection of Jesus to the complexities of science, more than 350 Alabama Baptists gathered in January 2013 to learn how

to engage in "gracious" and intelligent debates with nonbelievers. Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of

Missions (SBOM), said if that first SALT apologetics conference went over well, it would be back. And back it is. The second SALT conference

(Strategic Answers to Life's Thoughts) will be held Jan. 18-19, 2014, at First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

It is hosted by *The Alabama Baptist*, the SBOM, Tactical Faith and others.

During the conference, Christians will listen to speakers deal with tough questions such as "What role do atheists play in the current culture?" and "Is the God of the Old Testament the same as the God of the New?"

The conference is a step toward Tactical Faith's vision: "to get apologetic training back into the local church," said Matt Burford, one of the directors of the organization, which provides apologetics resources for Alabama Baptist churches.

He hopes the conference will give Christians confidence in discussing their faith with nonbelievers and will help Christians see the resources for apologetics that are available to them.

Speakers for the 2014 conference are:

► **Jay Watts**, a speaker and writer for Life Training Institute, a pro-life organization. At the 2013 conference, Watts challenged conference attendees — when in a debate — to focus on

whether or not the unborn is a human.

"Before they (pro-choice people) get to arguing the issue of abortion, they are already assuming that they can do things to the unborn that they can't do to other humans," he said. "We have to show them that they can't assume that."

► **Alex McFarland**, a religion and culture expert who serves as director of the Center for Christian Worldview and Apologetics at North Greenville University in Travelers Rest, S.C.

► **Bob Stewart**, associate professor of philosophy and theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. At the 2013 conference, Stewart equipped conference attendees to defend the reliability of the New Testament.

► **Richard Howe**, register of deeds for the Middlesex North District of Lowell, Mass., who provides commentary on political and historical topics.

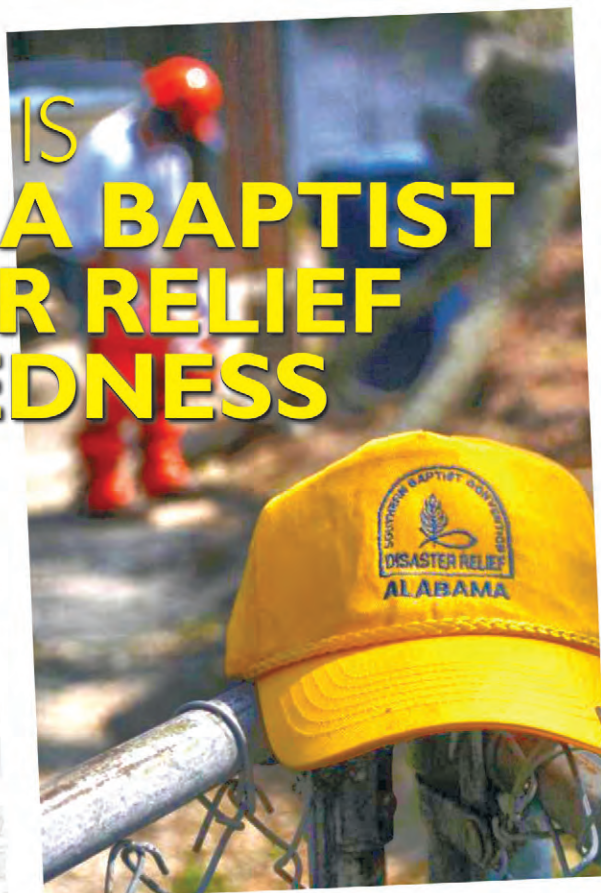
► **Paul Copan**, professor of philosophy and ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Fla.

For more information, visit www.tacticalfaith.com/salt-2014. (TAB)

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Photo courtesy of Coffee Baptist Association

COFFEE ASSOCIATION HELPS CHILDREN'S HOMES

Every year on the first Monday in December, Coffee Baptist Association collects cakes and other treats such as peanut brittle, cake mixes and icing, brownies, cupcakes, breads and even party goods to be used at the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) sites throughout the year. Coffee Association is the only association that does this, thus the name 'Coffee Cakes' came to be. On Dec. 2, 436 items were picked up to be delivered to ABCH sites across the state. Shown in the photo loading the goodies are (l to r) Kaye Clark, of Coffee Baptist Association; Riley Green, of the ABCH main office in Birmingham; and Mike Pickels, of Alabama Baptist Children's Home in Dothan.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 15

Explore the Bible By Dale Younce, Th.D. Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

BELIEVE EXCLUSIVELY John 14:1-14, 27-29

Many modern people think that Jesus is one among many ways to God. However, Scripture teaches that Jesus is the only way to God. Some believers have not thought carefully about the issue that He is the one and only way to a right relationship with God. Adults will benefit from this lesson by considering what Jesus Himself taught on this critical subject.

The Way to Be With God (1-6)

In view of His approaching departure, Jesus gave the disciples instructions to calm their fears. First He encouraged them to trust Him just as they were trusting God the Father without seeing Him, so they could trust Jesus after His departure. Second in the future they will be with God where He dwells. "My Father's house" refers to heaven, where there are many dwelling places. Third Jesus is going to prepare heaven for the disciples. At Calvary Jesus, by His atoning death, prepared believing sinners for an eternal heaven; now He announced that He is going to prepare heaven for His followers. Heaven truly is a prepared place for a prepared people. Fourth Jesus will come again to take His people to Himself. In the unfolding history of salvation, this is the first mention of what is commonly called The Rapture.

In response to Thomas' question, Jesus stated one of the most profound and emphatic truths of His ministry. There are not many ways to God; the way is not by keeping commandments, morality, religious ritual or church membership. There is only one way to God, a personal, by faith relationship with Jesus Christ. We can have a right relationship with God only through trusting Jesus.

The Way to Know God (7-11)

Jesus explained to His disciples that to know Him is to know God the Father because He and the Father are united in essence and in action, a mysterious union that exists between the Father and Himself. After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples would understand

better that Jesus is God the Son and that to know Him is to know God the Father. To look at Jesus is to look at the One who perfectly displays the Father. We can be confident that, when we come to know Jesus by trusting Him, we also come to know what God is like and what He did to provide a way of salvation.

The Way to Pray to God (12-14)

Jesus promised His disciples that by believing in Him, they would do greater works than He had done. In the Book of Acts there is found the record of apostles performing miracles of physical healing similar to those of Jesus. But the record also includes greater miracles — the conversion of 3,000 people on the day of Pentecost, the salvation of many Samaritans, the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch. The "greater works" refers to the world-proclamation of the gospel.

Jesus also promised His disciples that they could pray in His name. This does not mean to attach His name to the end of prayer; it means to ask according to His mind and will, things that will glorify God, benefit other people and work for our spiritual good.

The Way to Enjoy God's Peace (27-29)

As preparation for His leaving, Jesus gave His men God's peace. *Shalom*, the Hebrew word for "peace," has a much larger meaning than the mere absence of war or distress. It includes such ideas as wholeness, completeness, health, security and prosperity. God's peace results in joy and contentment. The world's peace is selfish, temporary and inadequate. His "Shalom" is abundantly forever.

When Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I," He was not denying His own deity (John 10:30) nor was He denying His equality with God. During His earthly life, Jesus limited Himself by a human body; for that period of time He voluntarily laid aside the independent exercise of His divine attributes (the insignia of His glory) and voluntarily submitted Himself to God the Father. During those years of His earthly life, God the Father was greater than Jesus in the sense of His position, but not in the sense of His Person.

Bible Studies for Life By Thomas L. Fuller, Ph.D. Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

A LOVE YOU CAN EXPERIENCE Romans 5:6-11, 18-21

We spend a great deal of our lives in the pursuit of love, wanting and needing to be loved by another, which brings some of the greatest joys as well as the worst heartaches.

But God has loved us from the beginning and will love us to the end, no matter what. His gift of justification by faith through Jesus Christ is proof positive.

(6-8)

Paul has already set forth the truth that salvation comes to us as God's gift (3:23-24; 4:16a). It was a costly gift, the most expensive and extravagant ever given: the death of His Son, who took upon Himself our sins and our condemnation.

More extraordinary and amazing still is the fact that Christ died for us "while we were still sinners." That "Christ died for the ungodly" is purely an act of God's love and mercy, unmerited and undeserved on our part.

Tales of self-sacrificing love are not unknown to us in human affairs; it's the stuff of heroic epics and romantic dramas, though typically the beneficiaries in some way merit such an extraordinary gift. Paul acknowledges as much: "One will scarcely die for a righteous person" or "perhaps for a good person." We, however, are neither righteous nor good but sinners in rebellion against God. Dying for us, Jesus showed us the unfathomable depth of God's love.

(9-11)

The theme of Romans 5:1-11 is the blessings of our justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul uses the phrase "we rejoice" three times (vv. 2, 3, 11).

Here in vv. 9-11 the cause for rejoicing

is the Christian's reconciliation to God. God created us for unhindered relationship with Him, but our sin has resulted in estrangement instead. Being "justified by His blood," Jesus has reconciled us to God (Col. 1:21-22). We rejoice in the new life of unhindered fellowship we now enjoy through Christ's sacrifice. While once we were enemies, rightly deserving condemnation and wrath in the coming day of God's judgment, we will be saved from it. In the meantime, we live the life of a reconciled subject, drawing life and hope from the loving and gracious king (Rom. 6:8-11; Phil. 3:10-11). At His right hand sits the Son, who lives now to make intercession for us to the Father.

(18-21)

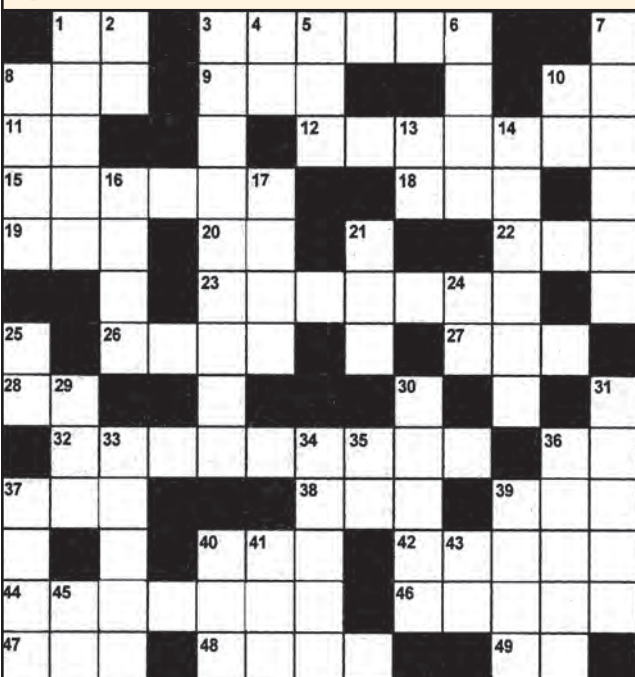
Yet another gift of God's grace that demonstrates His boundless love for us is eternal life in Jesus Christ. Paul begins his thought in 5:12, drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ. As sin, death and condemnation came to us through Adam's disobedience, so Jesus' obedience brings righteousness, justification and new life. This is the doctrine of imputation: that God imputed Adam's sin to all, and imputes Christ's righteousness to all who will receive His gift by faith. Clothed thus in Christ's righteousness, we are saved from death unto eternal life.

Paul takes care to point out that "sin was in the world before the law was given" (v. 13), and that the law's introduction served only to "increase the trespass" (v. 20) or give greater visibility to sin's presence. Even here, God's grace is greater than our sin; it reigns victorious over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:54b-57). "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

**The Alabama Baptist will not publish an issue Dec. 26.
Sunday School lessons for Dec. 29 will be available at
www.thealabamabaptist.org.**

Christian Crossword

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Across

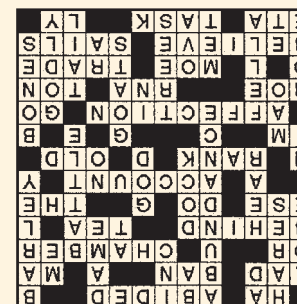
- Expression of satisfaction.
- Stayed.
- God heard the voice of the _____. (Gen. 21:17)
- A prohibition.
- Mom.
- One _____ the other.
- Joseph ... entered into his _____. (Gen. 43:30)
- The child Jesus tarried _____. (Luke 2:43)
- Drink originally from China.
- Compass direction.
- _____ not this folly. (Judg. 19:23)
- The people sin against _____ Lord. (1 Sam. 14:33)
- As they must give _____. (Heb. 13:17)
- _____ and good. (Gen. 41:5)
- And they did eat of the _____ corn. (Josh. 5:11)
- I am (contraction).

- Set your _____ on things above. (Col. 3:2)
- Let not the sun _____ down on your wrath. (Eph. 4:26)
- Deliver thyself as a _____ from the ... hunter. (Prov. 6:5)
- Ribonucleic acid.
- 2,000 pounds.
- Larry, Curley and _____.
- Their _____ hath been to feed cattle. (Gen. 46:32)
- That all men through him might _____. (John 1:7)
- What a boat needs if it has no motor.
- Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
- Of your daily _____. (Ex. 5:19)
- Added to a word to make it an adverb.
- The _____ of their joy. (2 Cor. 8:2)
- What a sheep says. (abbr.)
- English noblewoman.
- Three measures of _____ for a penny. (Rev. 6:6)
- Part of the ear or brain.
- He walked with _____. (Mal. 2:6)
- In a certain place.
- When kings go forth to _____. (2 Sam. 11:1)
- Ye therefore _____ them not. (John 8:47)
- A place to tie a boat.
- He that is of _____ heareth. (John 8:47)
- There had been _____ rain. (1 Kings 17:7)
- Hello.
- Former Chinese leader.
- Take ye a kid of the _____ for a sin offering. (Lev. 9:3)
- Full of dead men's _____. (Matt. 23:27)
- Guy, pal, a good _____. (2 Cor. 13:11)

Down

- Rabbits.
- Not B.C.

- All the _____ of the field are withered. (Joel 1:12)
- Not out.
- Reverence and _____ fear. (Heb. 12:28)
- They put on Jesus a scarlet _____. (Matt. 27:28)
- Take it by the _____. (Ex. 4:4)
- Martha ... went and _____ him. (John 11:20)
- Eggs.
- Egyptian god.
- "Entertainment Tonight." (abbr.)



'Families and Faith'

Will boomers return to religion?

Many baby boomers, like their parents, will attend religious services later in life. But unlike their parents, baby boomers are more likely to describe a deep, intense spiritual connection from a personal experience than a religious one from an institutional practice.

Vern Bengtson is the author of the recently published "Families and Faith." He based his findings and predictions on a study of 350 Southern California families and interviews with a subset of 156 families. The study's scope spanned six generations from 1909 to 1988.

Bengtson is a professor emeritus of gerontology and sociology at the University of Southern California. He discussed boomers, the rebellious group born between 1946 and 1964, and religion with Religion News Service.

Q: Which part of the study made you think many boomers will end up attending religious services when they currently do not?

A: We now know that the oldest generations had an uptick in attending religious services after retirement. ... I'm willing to predict this will happen to [boomers] based on what we've observed in older generations and from what we heard in the interviews with boomers.

Q: You list examples in your book of young boomers saying they reject religion. How then do you make the jump that they will eventually go to a church ... when they're older?

A: When people get older, they ... have more time to think about moral, religious and spiritual things. Our study shows this. ... They will also face a serious illness or lose a loved one for the first time. The religious education of their grandchildren becomes a concern for some grandparents. ... They might have skipped a generation by not educating their own children, but they got older and discovered one of the most wonderful things in life and won't want to miss an opportunity with their grandchildren.

Q: How do the religious

and spiritual views of baby boomers set them apart from the other generations?

A: The oldest groups (1909–1931) were religious and went to church until a certain age set in when they found it physically too difficult to go anymore. When asked if they were spiritual, they said "What's spirituality?" They were more likely to link spirituality and religion to institutional practice.

Boomers were the first generation to clearly differentiate between spirituality and reli-

gion. ... They are the first to associate spirituality with an emotion, an intense feeling of connection with God.

Millennials (early 1980s to early 2000s) said, "Religion — what's that?" ... They have much less of an awareness of religious ... traditions.

Q: The number of "nones" — those who claim no traditional religious affiliation — has doubled to 20 percent of the U.S. population in one decade. Does your research support or dispute that finding?

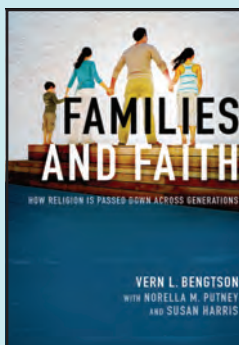
A: First of all, this is a varied group. ... Some of the nones are still looking to find a religion to meet their needs. Some are spiritual but not religious. Some attend religious services. And some are anti-religious.

Q: What brought about the development of the "nones"?

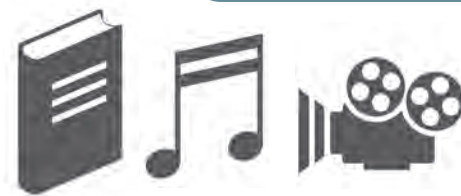
A: There's no single answer. We have seen a high degree of intergenerational similarity in nonreligion today, and the transmission of nonreligion from parents to their children can be seen to a far greater degree than in the past. Some of this is rooted in the 1960s and 1970s, a time of great social upheaval.

Q: Is there any sign the nones will ... move toward stronger religious affiliations?

A: I can speak from a personal experience. I came from a conservative religious family. ... I started to question my faith during college. ... I was an atheist for 35 years. But when I retired, I walked into a progressive church on Easter Sunday, heard the choir singing and was utterly surprised by joy. I haven't stopped going to church. (RNS)



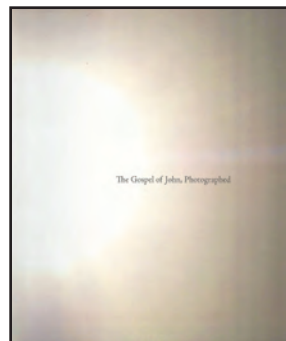
Media reviews



The Gospel of John, Photographed

David Kevin Weaver. Four Line Media, 2012. 341 pp. (Hardback).

What a beautiful way to read the Gospel of John. "The Gospel of John, Photographed" contains the entire Gospel of John (KJV) broken into short passages on each left page with a corresponding photograph on the right side.



The photos were all taken in Israel, but they are not especially predictable. I expected historic sites mentioned in the Book of John, but many of them are modern — some, surprising. For example, to go with the passage in which Jesus said, "Labour

not for the meat which perisheth," the photographer snapped a picture of trash in a dumpster. Odd. Other photos — not quite as odd — include a modern city gate at Capernaum, a pile of freshly-caught fish from Jerusalem and a pair of feet covered by water in the Jordan River. Once past the expectation of historical pictures, it becomes fun to anticipate what might be coming next.

I saved this book to review during the Christmas season because it would make such a beautiful gift. At 341 pages, it is very large and heavy, a good coffee-table book. And for someone who loves the Gospel of John (who doesn't?), it is a wonderful way to read and reread those words.

Once-A-Day Country Faith: 56 Reflections From Today's Leading Country Music Stars

Compiled by Deborah Evans Price. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2013. 128 pp. (Hardback).



Are you convinced the real "day the music died" was that day in 1963 when Patsy Cline perished in a plane crash? Then this may be the book you've been looking for. Or not. More about the "or not" part in a minute.

"Once-A-Day Country Faith" is a collection of contributions from 56 country music artists. The compiler of the book, Deborah Evans Price, asked each artist which passage from the Bible is most meaningful to him or

her and why. This book is the result. The answers are short, quick reads that vary in their spiritual depth.

Beautifully photographed and colorful, the book would make a nice gift for your favorite country music fan.

If you, like me, haven't listened to country music since your mother used to drag you to the Ryman Auditorium on Saturday nights, you might be disappointed. No Waylon or Loretta here. If, on the other hand, you know who Josh Turner, Danny Gokey and Lauren Alaina are, you'll probably love this book.

A Web Too Tight

Barbara Eubanks. Mustang, Okla.: Tate Publishing, 2012. 240 pp. (Paperback).

When I first got this book to review, I thought there had been a mistake. The cover has a picture that is a little racy. Nothing obscene or pornographic, mind you, but a little different from the books I usually get. When I read it, I realized that the subject matter was a little different, too.



"A Web Too Tight" is a fictional story about a pastor who, like King David, succumbed to temptation. Also, like David, the pastor in the story is overwhelmed with guilt and repentant but still has to deal with the consequences of his sin.

While the story is well written and interesting, it is a little too pat and predictable. In my experience, life tends to be messy, without all of the loose ends tying themselves up quite so neatly.

Overall it is an effective book that paints a picture of the lasting damage caused by a pastor who has fallen. 📖

Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



If you have a book you would like reviewed, mail a copy to:
P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640.

Memphis Grizzlies guard Keyon Dooling takes a shot during the 2013 playoffs first-round series with the Los Angeles Clippers.

Anchor of faith

Memphis Grizzlies guard Dooling keeps his faith despite troubled past

A private conversation preceded a public confession. Keyon Dooling, a guard for the Memphis Grizzlies, told his wife Natosha something she never knew. A few months later, in November 2012, he let the whole world in on the secret during an interview with Katie Couric on her talk show “Katie.”

In the restroom of a Seattle restaurant, Dooling was touched inappropriately. A floodgate of memories followed.

“I could have been telling you this story from behind bars because I felt the anger that I had never felt from that moment,” Dooling said.

Flashbacks from his childhood came out in post-traumatic stress disorder, he said.

“I lost my mind for awhile. I went through some serious spiritual warfare,” Dooling said. “If it wasn’t for the presence of the Lord in my life and me seeking Him, I would either be in jail or in an asylum.”

When Dooling was 5 he began to be sexually molested by men, women and youth. It continued into his preteen years. The abuse and hurt led to him “acting out at a very young age.” He became sexually active and began to drink alcohol and smoke.

“I got disconnected when I got touched but I still knew the Lord. I still heard His voice,” said Dooling, now 33.

‘Deep wound’

The “deep wound” continued to haunt him throughout his NBA career. Growing up in Fort Lauderdale, Texas, and playing at Dillard High School, he received a scholarship to play point guard at the University of Missouri in Columbia. From there he was drafted by the Orlando Magic in the first round (10th overall) in 2000.

He was immediately traded to the Los Angeles Clippers and would play with four more teams before landing in Boston in 2011.

“I was embarrassed about being molested, especially when it happened from a man,” he said. “There was a fear that I



Photo by Joe Murphy/NBAE via Getty Images

would be judged, that I would be talked about. I felt almost demon-possessed with anger and with hurt, and the enemy was really testing me.”

To deal with the hurt, Dooling retired from basketball. He walked away from \$1 million.

Then he entered a mental hospital in Wellesley, Mass., for four days.

“I just remember saying, ‘Lord, I am getting out of here. I got to be there for my family, my wife, my children. I have got to be there for myself.’”

Faith has become an anchor, Dooling said.

“It’s like the Holy Spirit filled me. I felt the Holy Spirit for the first time and that was the most precious feeling I have ever felt in my life. If you seek the Lord, you really open yourself up. Just like if you open yourself up to negativity, if you open yourself up to drugs and alcohol, it can lead to doom. If you open yourself up to the Word of God and seek the Lord, He will fill you.”

During the last five years, and especially in 2013, Dooling has been seeking the Lord more earnestly.

“I started to get to know Him for myself, get to know His voice, get to know His ways and what He expects of me as a Christian,” he said. “Jesus means everything. Everything that I have gone through I believe happened to me for a reason. It molded me into the person I am, the man I am becoming. I really love the man who

I am becoming. I couldn’t say this a year ago.”

Basketball returned. In April 2013, Dooling was signed by the Grizzlies. He played seven regular season games and 13 playoff games.

No longer ashamed of what happened, Dooling and his wife have started a foundation called Respect to raise awareness of sexual abuse. And he has learned that basketball is what he does, not who he is.

What he does is play two positions. His 3-point shot is extremely accurate (.417) and he is a good defender.

Strong faith and will

“He brings us a good point guard presence off the bench. He brings a lot of veteran leadership,” said Grizzlies forward Austin Daye. “He definitely keeps his faith with him. I know he has gone through some hard times but I know he has stuck with it and been able to fight through it. That shows his faith and will are strong.”

Former Memphis coach Lionel Hollins described him as a veteran with life experience. “He has had some issues he has had to deal with that a lot of our younger players have never had to deal with,” Hollins said. “He gives a perspective that is real.”

Dooling said there are obstacles to overcome every day.

“I am not perfect by any stretch of the imagination,” he said. “I am trying to keep my eyes on the Lord.” (TAB)

“Jesus means everything. Everything that I have gone through I believe happened to me for a reason. It molded me into the person I am, the man I am becoming. I really love the man who I am becoming. I couldn’t say this a year ago.”

Keyon Dooling
Memphis Grizzlies