



Jan. 2, 2014
Vol. 179, No. 1

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

INSIDE



Top newsmakers of 2013: Pope Francis, Nelson Mandela, more

◆ Page 3



New Alcoholic Beverage Control program targets underage drinking in Alabama

◆ Pages 4-5



Theology 101: Biblical theology for people in the pews

◆ Page 9

MetaCamp, which trains Christians to become disciples, offers modules that involve a lot of experiential learning and group study. 'We want to equip people to be fruitful disciples for the Kingdom,' said Curtis Sergeant, founder of MetaCamp and a former International Mission Board representative.



Making DISCIPLES

Dadeville training center teaches Christians to become multiplying disciple makers

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Dave Treat recently learned a question that he says will drive the rest of his life:

"Am I a disciple worth reproducing?"

He started asking this question while at MetaCamp, a new training center in Dadeville that teaches Christians to make disciples who make more disciples and eventually multiply house churches.

"I went with the feeling that a lot of what I knew about discipleship was incomplete or downright wrong and was ready to have my assumptions and practices challenged. I was not disappointed," said Treat, director of missional communities at Asbury United Methodist Church, Madison.

After his time at MetaCamp, Treat let go of a

lot of theory "in favor of the reality of changed lives," he said.

That's what Curtis Sergeant said he hopes MetaCamp does — take Christians from a mindset of "we're a Christian nation, we already know how to do all this stuff" to a lifestyle of active disciple making.

Equipping people

The command to "make disciples" demands obedience from all Christ followers, but "if you look around, you don't see a lot of multiplying disciple makers," said Sergeant, a former International Mission Board (IMB) representative who founded MetaCamp. "We want to equip people to be fruitful disciples for the Kingdom."

So far, the numbers show that is what's happening.

Since Sergeant began the camp's first teaching modules a couple years ago, its participants



Photos courtesy of MetaCamp

In addition to being a training facility, MetaCamp's new Lake Martin location can be rented by groups and churches.

have started about 200 house churches in the U.S. and 162 overseas, with more than 10,500 new professions of faith.

"Some of those are among what were previously unengaged people groups who now have their first church ever," he said.

The principles and processes Sergeant teaches are the type taught to full-time missionaries — but they should be used by all Christians, he said.

"There's not a reason that missionaries would be the only people who get this sort of training," Sergeant said. "It's not rocket science, and the principles are applicable to everybody. We wanted to make that kind of training available to 'ordinary' believers so that they could be effective citizens here."

(See 'Training,' page 12)

Coming next week...

When same-sex couples come to church



COMMENT

New Features for a New Year

With this first issue of 2014, *The Alabama Baptist* begins introducing four new features that will appear regularly in the state Baptist paper.

The first feature is a new weekly column called Theology 101, which will be written by former Beeson Divinity School associate dean Jerry Batson. This column is written for lay readers. Its purpose is to present in easy-to-read, easy-to-understand fashion the foundational truths about what evangelical Christians believe about God, the Bible and the Christian faith. Each article will be short — about 500 words. That means the topics will be presented in bite-size portions and that it may take several articles to deal with a single topic.

No topic will be presented in exhaustive fashion. There will always be more to say about every Bible-based belief. But regular readers of the column will gain new understanding about what Baptists believe and why we believe it.

Theology is not a verse-by-verse study. Theology takes an idea and examines all the Bible says about that idea in order to gain a more full understanding than any single passage provides.

The need for a better understanding of Christian theology is self evident. Americans, including many in our churches, have become biblically illiterate. Barna Research and others tell us that the majority of Americans cannot name more than two or three of Jesus' disciples or know where to find the Ten Commandments in the Bible.

The nature of Christ

If we are so ignorant of simple factual information, imagine how little we know about the nature of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit or the doctrine of last things. These are the kind of truths Theology 101 will examine.

Our writer Jerry Batson is a Bessemer native and a Samford University graduate. He earned his Th.D. degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and spent the majority of his ministry career as a professor teaching at The Baptist College of Florida and the University of Mobile. For 20 years he taught at Samford's Beeson Divinity School where he served as associate dean and professor of New Testament.

In addition, Batson is a well-known writer of Sunday School curriculum for LifeWay Christian Resources and serves as pastor of First



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Baptist Church, McCalla. His first Theology 101 column can be found on page 9 of this issue.

A second weekly feature beginning with this issue is Reflections. Some might call it a cartoon. Walker County native Joe McKeever will provide original material for *The Alabama Baptist* dealing with the life of the church. Some of the Reflections will deal with programs and emphases regularly promoted in Alabama Baptist life. Others will deal with events and observances. Some will be about everyday experiences. All will be designed to make us chuckle as we see ourselves through a mirror of humor.

It has been said that Baptists sometimes take themselves too seriously. It is also said that a sign of maturity is the ability to laugh at one's self. Hopefully the Reflections cartoons will cause us to be a little less "uptight" and occasionally recognize the humorous side of what we do.

Still there is an inherent danger in using humorous material. What one sees as humorous, another sees as deadly serious. What causes one to laugh causes another to feel insulted. It will never be our intent to belittle or insult through the Reflections cartoons. Their only purpose will be to help us look at ourselves in a mirror and see a reflection.

McKeever is well known to Alabama Baptists. Most recently he was at the 2013 annual meeting in Huntsville drawing sketches of messengers who would pose for him. McKeever's cartoons have been published many places across the years including *The Birmingham News*.

The third feature will be a monthly column titled A Certain Trumpet: Sermons by Alabama

Baptists. The title comes from 1 Corinthians 14:8 where the apostle Paul points out the pitfalls of an uncertain trumpet and urges readers to be clear and distinct in their communication.

Each month this column will provide encouragement and inspiration offered in sermonic fashion. It will also give readers opportunity to experience the varied ways Baptists approach a sermon. The sermons will not be the full text preached from a pulpit but a digest-like presentation that will help readers understand the insights offered by the preacher.

The initial series focuses on the Ten Commandments with doctoral-level graduates serving in Alabama offering insights into the meaning of one commandment each month for the first 10 months of the year.

The fourth and final new feature beginning in January is titled Heroes of the Faith and will be written by Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. This monthly column

will look back in history to highlight famous Christians. Their stories will illustrate dramatic ways God has worked across time and illustrate important lessons for today's Christians.

Sloan is a noted writer, having been published in a variety of magazines from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's *Decision* magazine to Focus on the Family publications to LifeWay's *Mature Living* magazine. She also is the author of two books dealing with faith stories of missionaries and the importance of spiritual disciplines.

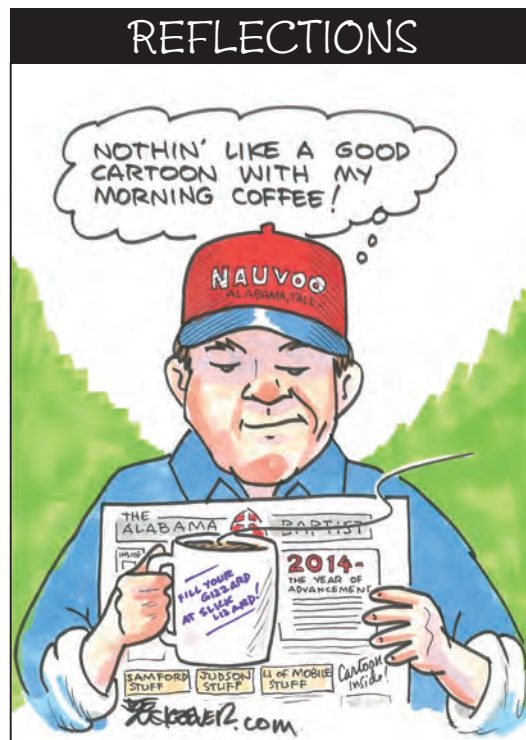
The Heroes of the Faith column is scheduled for

the third issue of each month.

The four new features for the new year only add to the original content found only in *The Alabama Baptist*, which remains the only publication devoted to what God is doing through Baptists in Alabama, the nation and the world.

Whether one is looking for new ideas for local church use, the latest updates from Baptist representatives across the globe, personal stories filled with inspiration and encouragement, Bible studies or news from and about Baptists, the one place providing all of that and more is *The Alabama Baptist*.

Take time to read your state Baptist paper each week. It is an indispensable companion on the lifelong journey of Christian discipleship. 📖



Follow Bob Terry
Twitter
@drbobterry





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

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

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

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash
Executive Editor

Grace Thornton
Assistant Editor

Neisha Fuson
Editorial Assistant
for Online Communications

Julie Payne
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

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

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

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

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

Full member of
Alabama Press Association

'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'

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

Top newsmakers of 2013

Pope Francis tops news according to Religion Newswriters members

He's *Time* magazine's Person of the Year, the most talked about topic on Facebook and the most popular baby name-sake in Italy. No surprise, Pope Francis also is the top Religion Story of the Year and the Religion Newsmaker of the Year, according to a poll of Religion Newswriters members.

Francis beat out his predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who was the No. 2 story, and evangelist Billy Graham — who recently turned 95 and is reportedly ailing — for the newsmaker designation. Benedict made news when he became the first pope to resign in almost six centuries.

The rankings were based on results of an online ballot conducted between Dec. 13 and Dec. 16, 2013. Only Religion Newswriters Association members were eligible to vote.

Coming in third among the top religion stories was the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision permitting gay "marriage" in California and ending the ban on federal employee benefits for same-sex couples. Within months of the June decision, the total number of states permitting same-sex "marriage" rose to 16, including Illinois and Hawaii.

Fourth on the list were the Obama administration's concessions to faith-based groups and businesses that objected to the contra-

ception mandate in the Affordable Care Act. While opponents have reaped mixed results in lower courts, the Supreme Court has agreed to take Hobby Lobby's challenge.

(On Dec. 20, Federal District Judge Timothy DeGiusti issued a preliminary injunction in a case involving GuideStone Financial Resources. DeGiusti's ruling means organizations that use GuideStone's health care plans, now or in the future, will be protected from participating in providing abortion-causing drugs for the foreseeable future. A trial date to make a final decision has not yet been set.)

And the fifth religion story of the year was the central role Islam has played in the Middle East after the Arab Spring. The Egyptian military ousted the Muslim Brotherhood-led government and cracked down on its supporters while Sunni Islamist fighters increased their role in Syria's opposition.

Here are the other stories that rounded out the Top 10:

6. The death of Nelson Mandela, icon of reconciliation and nonviolence, at the age of 95. He was remembered as a modern-day Moses who led his people out of racial bondage.
7. Religious-inspired attacks killed scores of people, with extremist Buddhist monks inciting attacks on Muslims in Myanmar and Muslim extremists targeting Christians in Egypt, Kenya and Pakistan.



BP photo

Hundreds of people await the Supreme Court's decision on gay 'marriage' at a rally in front of the court building June 26, 2013.



RNS photo

Nelson and Winnie Mandela greet children on the tarmac at Harare Airport in Zimbabwe soon after the ANC's leader was released after 27 years of imprisonment in 1990.



RNS photo

Pope Francis was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year for 2013.

8. More than one in five U.S. Jews now report having no religion, according to a landmark survey from the Pew Research Center.

9. The Boy Scouts of America, after much debate, voted to accept Scouts — but not scoutmasters — who are openly gay. Some evangelical leaders opposed the move while several Catholic leaders endorsed it.

10. Muslims joined other Americans in condemning a devastating bombing at the Boston Marathon by two young Muslim brothers.

More than 300 journalists were surveyed and more than 30 percent responded. (RNS)



en.wikipedia.org

Celebrations follow the capture of the second suspect in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings in Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood April 19, 2013.

'Under Age, 'Under Arrest'

Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board's new program targets underage drinking

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Underage drinking is a serious concern nationwide, and a new program in Alabama is working to increase awareness of the dangers.

The program, "Under Age, Under Arrest," is an initiative of the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board (ABC), the agency tasked with enforcing alcohol, tobacco and drug laws in Alabama. The effort was launched Nov. 6, 2013, with a program at Prattville High School.

The goal of the program is to make parents and teens aware of the health and safety issues surrounding alcohol abuse by minors, according to Mac Gipson, administrator of the ABC Board.

"Underage drinking and binge drinking remain big problems in Alabama and the nation, taking or ruining many lives every year," Gipson said. "The ABC Board wants students and parents to understand both the legal and social

costs of such irresponsible drinking," he said.

According to the 2009 Youth Risk Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one-third of Alabama high school students admitted to current alcohol use at the time of the survey. More than two-thirds of those surveyed said they had tried alcohol in the past.

Many of those underage drinkers do not realize the heavy physical and emotional toll that alcohol can take, said Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), one of the organizations partnering with the ABC Board on the initiative.

At an "Under Age, Under Arrest" event at McAdory High School on Nov. 19, Godfrey urged students to refrain from taking that first drink and asked those who are already drinking to stop.

Godfrey and other speakers also emphasized the dangers of binge drinking, a behavior defined as having several drinks (five for males, four for females) within a very short span of time. According to a report by the U.S. Department of Justice, about 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by youth under the age of 21 in the United States is in the form of binge drinking, such as taking shots.

Binge drinking

Julie Nix, director of counseling services at Jacksonville State University, believes that peer pressure is a significant factor in binge drinking. "Students often think they need to blow off steam, to unwind, to party hard," Nix said. "Also binge drinking is often situational — a football game, the end of finals, a big party. It's a long-standing rite of passage."

Binge drinking and alcohol use in general can bring long-lasting consequences as well. In 2010, 10,228 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for nearly one-third of all traffic-related deaths in the United States, according

to CDC statistics. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that 5,000 people under the age of 21 die annually from alcohol-related car crashes,

homicides, suicides, alcohol poisoning, accidents and injuries. Thousands more seek help at emergency rooms each year for alcohol-related injuries, including physical assault, sexual assault and date rape.

"In almost all sexual assault cases we see, alcohol is involved," Nix said. "Communication gets blurrier when you start drinking."

All these reasons and more are why Alabama needs a program like "Under Age, Under Arrest," Gipson

said. In partnership with schools, local agencies and community organizations statewide, the initiative will remind teens that under Alabama law, it is not only illegal for those under 21 to drink, but minors can be

arrested, fined and sent to jail for drinking or possessing wine, beer or liquor. In addition, ads and billboards will remind parents and other adults that anyone who provides alcohol to minors also can be arrested, fined or jailed.

Studies show that more than half of underage drinkers get their alcohol from family and friends and they often consume that alcohol in the home, Gipson said. Such numbers emphasize the importance of the ABC Board's effort to prevent underage drinking.

'Click it or Ticket'

"We want to make the 'Under Age, Under Arrest' as synonymous with underage drinking as the 'Click it or Ticket' slogan is with wearing seatbelts," Gipson said.

Schools or organizations interested in hosting an "Under Age, Under Arrest" event or in getting involved to spread the message of the campaign can find information and resources at www.underage-underarrest.com.

"We'll take this around the state," Gipson said.

"As the state (ABC) agency, we see it as our responsibility to do what we can to police and discourage this form of irresponsible drinking." ❧

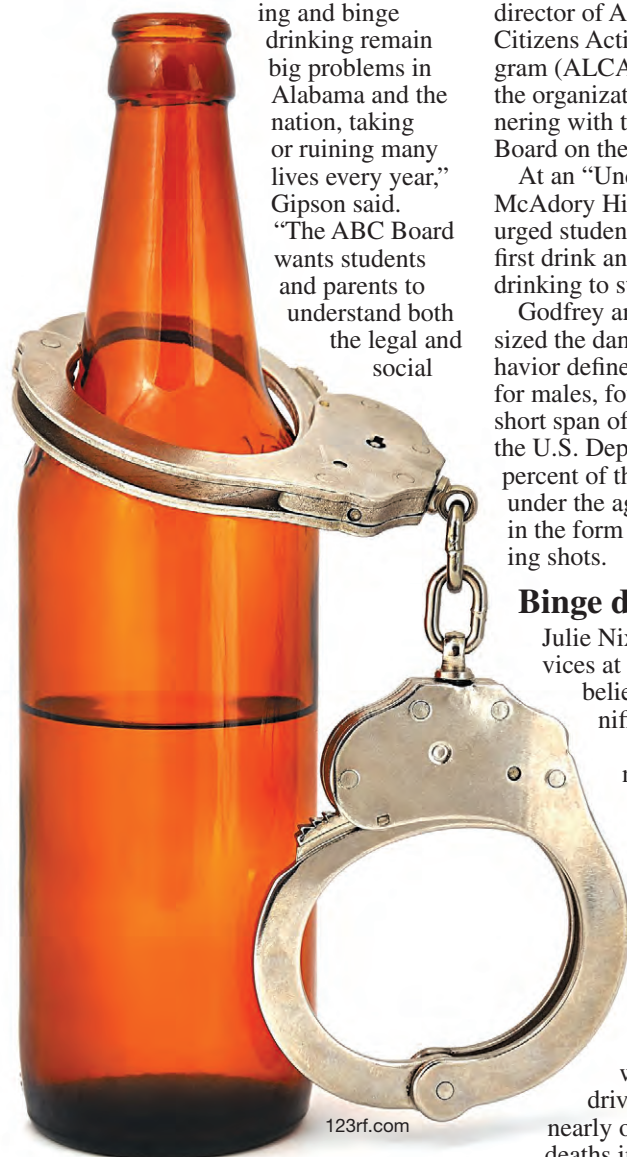
"Underage drinking and binge drinking remain big problems in Alabama and the nation, taking or ruining many lives every year."

**Mac Gipson
administrator, Alabama Alcoholic
Beverage Control Board**

Fast facts of underage drinking

- ▶ Underage drinking costs the citizens of Alabama **\$1 billion** a year. The costs come from medical care, loss of work, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth.
- ▶ Each year, about **5,000 people** under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking. These include deaths from drunk driving, other accidents, homicides, suicides and alcohol poisoning.
- ▶ More than **190,000 people** under age 21 are sent to emergency rooms for alcohol-related injuries each year.
- ▶ Young bodies and developing brains are especially ill-suited for the effects of alcohol.
- ▶ In Alabama, it is **illegal for anyone under the age of 21** to consume or possess any alcoholic beverage. Underage drinkers and the adults who provide them alcoholic beverages are subject to arrest and possibly jail. And underage drinkers will have their driver's licenses suspended.

Source: www.underage-underarrest.com



123rf.com

Dangers of alcohol

Several reasons to avoid underage drinking

By Joe Godfrey
Alabama Citizens Action Program

When I talk to schoolchildren and young adults about the use of alcohol, I give them four sound reasons why they shouldn't drink.

One, alcohol is a mind-altering and addictive drug. Studies show that young people who start drinking in their teen years are much more likely to become problem drinkers and alcohol dependent. In fact, according to government surveys, of adults who started drinking before age 15, about 40 percent say they have the signs of alcohol dependence. That rate is four times higher than for adults who didn't drink until they were 21.

Two, alcohol kills. Nationwide about 5,000 people under the age of 21 die each year from car crashes, homicides, suicides, alcohol poisoning and a variety of injuries as a direct result of underage drinking, reports the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). In any given year, more than 190,000 people under the age of 21 will visit an emergency room for alcohol-related injuries, according to the NIAAA.

Three, alcohol is costly. I don't mean in the price of a bottle of beer, wine or liquor. I mean in the economic costs resulting from the problems associated with drinking. Underage drinking alone cost U.S. citizens \$62 billion in 2010, according to the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center. Those costs include medical care, work loss and pain and suffering associated with the use of alcohol by youths. In Alabama, the tab tops \$1 billion. Of course, the costs associated with adult problem drinking, to which many of these young drinkers will graduate, runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

'You just aren't yourself'

Four, alcohol makes you do bad things. From committing crimes and violent acts to driving while intoxicated to engaging in risky behavior and promiscuity, you just aren't yourself when you drink. Under the influence of alcohol, people do things they ordinarily would never do. And they don't perform well in school, work or athletics either. Alcohol brings out the worst in you, not the best.

When it comes to alcohol, Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) advocates abstinence for everyone. The message about the dangers alcohol poses to those under age is one our young people especially need to hear.

That is why I am pleased the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board has launched a new initiative, "Under Age, Under Arrest," with the purpose of reduc-

ing underage and binge drinking. And it is why ALCAP has joined the ABC Board and other state agencies and organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving in this campaign to convince students to say no to alcohol.

To some, ALCAP and the ABC Board may seem a strange alliance. They see the ABC Board as only a vehicle through which the state of Alabama sells liquor.

However, they miss the bigger picture. Alabama is not in the "liquor business." Through the ABC Board, Alabama is in the alcoholic beverage "control" business.

The repeal of Prohibition in the 1930s gave states the authority to regulate, control and limit the flow of alcoholic beverages. Alabama wisely established the ABC Board to regulate alcohol for the benefit and safety of its citizens.

And it's working for the citizens of Alabama.

Alabama ranks 48th among the states in consumption of alcohol per adult, but it's at the top in tax revenue per unit of alcohol sold. That means our system of control nets the most revenue to help pay for essential state services without having to push liquor sales. In fact, states like Alabama that have strong controls on alcohol sales consistently rank lowest in consumption and highest in taxes generated.

Conversely noncontrol states generally have more stores selling liquor, with those stores offering their products at expanded hours — some 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those states also are bombarded with more alcohol advertising and promotions, to which children are especially susceptible.

Alabama doesn't need a store on nearly every street selling liquor all day and all night. And we don't need more advertising enticing our young people to drink.

It is children and young adults the ABC Board is trying to save from the dangers of alcohol. Their young bodies, developing brains and level of maturity are poorly suited to handle such an addictive and powerful drug.

We want Alabama's young people to live alcohol-free. Achieving that requires state agencies such as the ABC Board, organizations such as ALCAP and individuals from various backgrounds — all working to spread the message that alcohol and youth simply don't mix.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Joe Godfrey is executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program and American Character Builders (www.alcap.com). His email address is jgodfrey@alcap.com. For more information about "Under Age, Under Arrest," visit www.underage-underarrest.com. ☛



GODFREY



Photo by Melanie Smith

Gwenda Mullins (standing, left) and Jessica Hagemore (standing, right) sing 'O Holy Night' during the Christmas party at Woodland Haus in Cullman.

Spreading Christmas cheer

West Cullman churches minister at assisted living centers

Melanie Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Along with about 20 of her fellow residents, Mavis Wooten, 91, snacked and chatted with visitors Dec. 17, 2013, at Woodland Haus in Cullman, an assisted living center.

When one of the helpers came by her table with reindeer antler headbands, she smilingly donned a set and sang along to "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer."

The retired English teacher said the volunteers from churches in West Cullman Baptist Association who come each year to give a Christmas party are always friendly and caring.

The party, which included gifts for every resident, was not a one-time activity for the associational Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). And 2013 was not even the 10th or 20th Christmas in a row they have done it. The commitment has gone on more than three decades. And the recipients of the gifts and visits are not just in one facility.

Churches band together to provide gifts for every nursing home and assisted living resident in Cullman County — about 660 of them in eight facilities in 2013. Volunteers bring filled gift bags, conduct devotionals, sing, pray, provide refreshments and visit with residents.

They have been doing it since 1981, according to Iva Nell Rodgers, associational WMU director, and Vicki Nix of the association office. In 2013, 48 to 50 of the 60 churches in the association collected items or sent money to buy them, Rodgers said.

Hilda Wise, nursing home parties' leader for the WMU team, said it is a big job but she has a good committee. They make sure every resident is remembered. One facility alone has 205 residents.

Items and gift bags come in from churches to the associational office each year until they

overflow two rooms. Volunteers make sure bags have necessities, like shampoo and body wash, along with Scriptures and extras like cookies and calendars. The workers conduct two parties each Tuesday and Thursday during a two-week span in December.

The project prompted an overflow response in 2013, Rodgers said. She thinks the success is a holdover from 2012, when volunteers crocheted enough curly scarves to give each woman resident.

"Everyone got excited" in 2012, and it made the ladies who participated want to come back in 2013, Rodgers said.

'They're jewels'

Jack Collins, associational missionary for West Cullman Association, said it is really meaningful that WMU does this, and the staffs at the facilities count on it. "They're jewels," he said of the dedicated volunteers.

Pat Williamson, WMU director for Panama Baptist Church, West Point, said her congregation has specifically hosted Woodland Haus's party for six years and provided gifts for all the residents. Her relative Hazel Williamson was a resident there but died recently.

"We love all of the ladies and men and just keep on doing it," she said.

Williamson said WMU sponsors the project, but the church, which has about 22 active members, includes the project in its budget and everyone helps.

Volunteer Gwen Welch of New Prospect Baptist Church said she had already helped at two of the earlier parties and made time Dec. 17 to go again.

"Nursing homes need more volunteers to help, and to me it's really rewarding," she said.

Wooten said she does not often get to attend First Baptist Church, Cullman, where she has been a member since 1956 and formerly taught women for 27 years.

"This party means the people care for us and haven't forgotten us," she said. ☛

Duck Commander suspended

'Duck Dynasty' faces opposition from A&E

Were Phil Robertson's comments belief or bigotry? Does the First Amendment apply to publicly identified personalities or is politically correct speech the only accepted media currency?

Those are the issues being debated after A&E Television Network indefinitely suspended Robertson, the family patriarch of the hugely popular "Duck Dynasty" TV program, for comments made in an interview with *GQ Magazine*.

In response to a reporter's question about sinful behavior, Robertson said, "Start with homosexual behavior and just morph out from there. Bestiality, sleeping around with this woman and that woman and that woman and those men." He then uses graphic language to refer to male and female body parts involved in homosexual behavior.

Robertson added that homosexuals are not the only offenders. He added, "Neither the adulterers, the idolaters, the male prostitutes, the homosexual offenders, the greedy, the drunkards, the slanderers, the swindlers — they won't inherit the kingdom of God. Don't deceive yourself. It's not right" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation called Robertson's comments "some of the vilest and most extreme statements uttered against LGBT people in a mainstream publication."

A&E said it was "extremely disappointed" by Robertson's comments because the network has "always been strong supporters and champions of the LGBT community."

The statement then announced that Robertson was indefinitely suspended from filming "Duck Dynasty" episodes as the series begins its fifth season Jan. 15.

Response from the Christian community was quick and loud. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said proposing that people who hold to what every branch of the Christian faith has held to for 2,000 years is somehow bigoted or hateful is not productive for speech.

"Let's have the sort of cultural conversation that allows us to seek to persuade each other, not to seek to silence one another with intimidation," Moore said. "That's what real diversity is all about."

Chris Stone, founder of Faith Driven Consumer, declared, "Simply put, Phil Robertson is being censored and punished for quoting the Bible and A&E's treatment of him is punitive and highly discriminatory."

Politicians also weighed in. Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal praised Robertson and his family as "great citizens of the State of Louisiana."

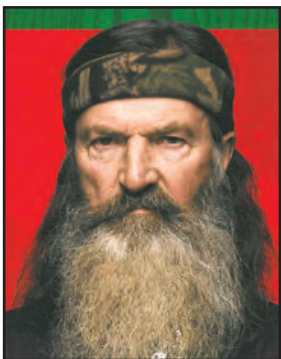
"The politically correct crowd is tolerant of all viewpoints, except those they disagree with," Jindal said in a statement.

Robertson's family released a statement Dec. 20 supporting the "Duck Commander."

"The family has spent much time in prayer since learning of A&E's decision. ... While some of Phil's unfiltered comments to the reporter were coarse, his beliefs are grounded in the teachings of the Bible," the statement said.

The family added, "We have had a successful working relationship with A&E but ... we cannot imagine the show going forward without our patriarch at the helm. We are in discussions with A&E to see what that means for the future of 'Duck Dynasty.'"

(Compiled from wire services)



ROBERTSON

Alabama Baptists receive seminary degrees

Alabama Baptists graduated with degrees at the master's level or higher from Southern Baptist seminaries and divinity schools during the fall 2013 semester. *The Alabama Baptist* was provided the following list of graduates by the schools.

Beeson Divinity School at Samford University:

Doctor of Ministry — Floyd Fredrick Thomas Beavers, Birmingham; Randall John Gruendyke, Upland, Ind.; John Brady Haynes, Orange Beach. *Master of Divinity* — Edwin Austin Baker, James Darrell Cook, Christopher David Culver, Anthony Kyle Dykes and Immanuel Paul Marsh, all of Birmingham; Patrick Logan Bone, Gastonia, N.C.; Nathan Howard Daniels and Jessie McAlpine, both of Pleasant Grove; Tyler Douglas Gresham, Selma; Johnathan Forrest Harris, Sylacauga; Phillip Andrew Hussey, Tuscaloosa; Johnathon David Miller, Montgomery, Ind.; Samuel William Noone, West Palm Beach, Fla.; Jacob Daniel Sims, Dora; Peter Benjamin Smith, Dayton, Ohio; David Raymond Tew, Cullman; Melanie Resha Van Laningham, Guntersville; Hayden

Kathryn Walker, Arkadelphia, Ark.; Christopher Ryan Yancey, Hoover. *Master of Arts in Theological Studies* — Rebecca Ramaiah Denson, Bangalore, India.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctorate of Ministry — Matt Andress, Enterprise; Chad Hayes, Birmingham; Jeffrey Ingram, Mobile; Michael Shannon Moses, Excel. *Doctor of Philosophy* — Gary Dennis, Opelika. *Master of Arts in Missiology* — Jake Goforth, Sardis City; Megan Danielle Hunter, Cullman; Nick Kelsoe, Mobile. *Master of Divinity* — David Hughes, Birmingham. *Master of Divinity with Specialization in Biblical Studies* — David Anderson, Enterprise. *Master of Divinity with Specialization in Christian Education* — Ty Wells, Russellville. *Master of Theology* — Chase Rogers, Pleasant Grove.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling — Ashley Lorraine Ralston, Selma. *Master of Arts in Christian Studies* — Robin Christy Hovater, Cullman; Allyson Jan Basden, Birmingham; Ray Alan Sanford,

Wetumpka. *Master of Divinity With Christian Ministry* — Shawn Michael Alldredge, Wetumpka; Caleb Matthew Miller, Decatur; Jarred Scott Pike and Chase Clairmont Krug, both of Birmingham. *Master of Theology* — Alex Shane Carr, Dora.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Arts in Theological Studies — Jason Bowman, Hueytown. *Doctor of Ministry* — Michael W. Colston, Muscle Shoals. *Master of Divinity* — Mathew C. Alexander, Boaz; Seth E. Curtis, Grove Hill; Charles T. Eldridge, Andalusia; Alton M. Skelton, Birmingham. *Doctor of Ministry* — Thomas H. McClendon Jr., Ozark; Paul A. Thompson, Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan. *Doctor of Philosophy* — Grady D. Smith, Auburn.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Divinity with a Concentration in Pastoral Leadership — Matthew DeWitt Crawford, Tuscaloosa. *Master of Divinity with a Concentration in International Church Planting* — Joshua Adam Mitchell, Birmingham. (TAB)

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Dempsey retires after 26 years in ministry

Bob Dempsey, who has served at Montgomery Baptist Association for more than 26 years, retired Dec. 31.

Dempsey served as the chairman of the deacons at Monaghan Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., and was active in ministry in the 1970s when he felt called into full-time ministry. In August 1981, he and his wife, Martha, quit their jobs and took a "faith leap" by moving to Kentucky and attending Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

The couple both attended seminary and had all but one class together, Bob Dempsey said. They earned the same degree, a master's in religious education, and walked across the stage together to receive their diplomas.

While in seminary, Bob Dempsey served as the minister of education at Victory Memorial Baptist Church, Louisville. He participated in a Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) program called PACT (Project Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities) and was assigned consultant Edward Freeman, who served with the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Later when Bob Dempsey became the minister of education at Campbellsville Baptist Church in Kentucky, he again asked for Freeman to be the church's consultant and help it stabilize and strategically plan to reach its community.

In 1987, Freeman heard that Montgomery Association was in need of a church development director and suggested Bob Dempsey as a candidate to then director of missions Buddy McGohon. "The rest is history," Bob Dempsey said.

Dempsey said a "centerpiece" of his work as the associate director of missions/church growth and development has been with strategic planning and noted that the associational team was named the PACT Consultant of the Year for the eastern half of the U.S. in 1993 by the Home Mission Board.

He said discipleship has been a meaningful aspect of his time in ministry and that he's taken joy in helping people "understand that if they are a Christian, they are disciples of Jesus Christ and God gives them their own personal calling."

The association honored Bob Dempsey at its annual meeting Nov. 4, 2013, at Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery.

He and his wife are members of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, and have two children and two grandchildren.

(Neisha Fuson)

Strickland named dean of Samford's School of Law

Henry C. Strickland III has been named dean of Samford University's Cumberland School of Law, effective July 1.

He succeeds John L. Carroll Jr., who is retiring after 13 years.

Strickland, a United Methodist, is a graduate of Presbyterian College in Clinton, S.C., and holds a law degree from Vanderbilt University School of Law in Nashville.

He is currently professor of law at Samford and teaches courses in alternate dispute resolution, arbitration, civil procedure, constitutional law and conflict of laws.

After practicing with a North Carolina firm for several years, Strickland joined Cumberland's faculty in 1988. He also previously served as a law clerk for U.S. District Judge Virgil Pittman in the Southern District of Alabama for two years and as Cumberland's associate dean for academic affairs from 2001-2011.

Strickland is "uniquely suited to assume the deanship of the Cumberland School of Law during this strategic phase of its history," said Samford Provost and Executive Vice President J. Bradley Creed. "He is a proven and experienced legal educator and is highly respected by faculty and alumni."

Strickland said it is an honor to serve as the dean of Cumberland School of Law.

"For more than 150 years, Cumberland has prepared exceptional lawyers who are devoted to serving their clients and their communities," he said. "I am excited about working with the outstanding faculty and staff of the law school, Cumberland's devoted alumni and the bar as we meet the challenges of continuing that tradition in the 21st century."

(TAB, Samford)



DEMPESEY



STRICKLAND

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Matthew Burford



BURFORD

*Hunter Street Baptist Church,
Birmingham
Birmingham Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: 1 Peter 3:15

FAVORITE HYMN: "Eternal Father, Strong to Save"

HOBBIES: Kayaking, hiking and playing trumpet

FAMILY STATUS: Married for 13 years to Holly; two children: Ben and Emily

Matthew Burford, 37, is president and founder of *Tactical Faith*, a nonprofit organization (www.tacticalfaith.com). The focus of *Tactical Faith* is to foster apologetics. Donations are used to offset the cost of bringing reputable speakers on various topics to churches, schools and other venues. In its three years, *Tactical Faith*, which is run by volunteers, has sponsored 28 events. Burford has received degrees from the University of Alabama and Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. He is pursuing a doctorate from Southern Evangelical Seminary in Matthews, N.C.

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

A: My father and mother. I became a Christian at the age of 6.

Q: When and how were you led into this ministry?

A: Under the leadership of Jay Wolf (at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association) with the acknowledgement that God was leading me to help the Christian church. That was in 2009, leading me into the ministry I'm in now. I was officially called in '97. That came from a realization that God was calling me to serve His church. That was when I was in college, at my home church of First Baptist Church, Saks (in Calhoun Baptist Association).

Q: What does this ministry demand?

A: It forces the Christian church, especially Baptists, to think reasonably about their faith in order to evangelize more effectively in an ever-changing culture.

Q: What do you get from this ministry?

A: The friendships that I have created — the pastors and laypeople. I've had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people throughout the Southeast. God has given me new Christian friends with the same desire that I do to further apologetics.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: I've had, since the beginning, emotional and spiritual support.

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

A: We started as three guys in a barbecue joint in Birmingham. We are now 60-plus people. I feel like my place in the ministry is to lead and to vision-cast and to get apologetics into the churches here in the Southeast.

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

A: It gives me the experience to provide spiritual leadership.

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

A: It's hard to put that into simple words. He has been the grounding and foundation for me. He took me early and I accepted Him early. He has always been with me. ☩

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.



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.

BESSEMER

► **Kevin Blackwell** will resign from his position as pastor of **Valley Creek Church, Hueytown**, on Jan. 5. He will take a position as director of church relations and assistant to the president at Samford University in Birmingham in early January. Blackwell holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University and a master of divinity degree and doctorate from New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as minister of students and associate pastor for Tannehill Valley Church, McCalla; Fairfield Highlands Church, Midfield; and West Side Church, Bessemer. He



BLACKWELL

also served Garywood Church, Hueytown, as youth minister. He and his wife, Lorrie, have four children.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, will host a luncheon and dinner for medical professionals Jan. 9, 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. with guest speaker Rebekah Naylor. Naylor served for 30 years as a medical missionary in Bangalore, India. She currently serves as a health care consultant for Baptist Global Response. The event also is part of Dawson's "Go Beyond" service emphasis and Naylor will speak at both K.E.Y. Bible Studies on Jan. 8. For information and to RSVP email Ben Hale at bhale@dawsonchurch.org. Gary Fenton is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Lookout Mountain Association** will host Harper Shannon

at a special meeting titled "The Bible; His Message for Me" at Mount Vernon Church, Collinsville, on Jan. 12 at 5 p.m. All area churches are invited to attend. Terry Burke is pastor. Lloyd Borden is director of missions.

MARION

► **Mount Olive Church, Hackleburg**, will host "Archie Watkins and the Smoky Mountain Reunion" (formerly the old Inspirations quartet) Jan. 9, 7 p.m. For information call 205-395-1256. James Nichols is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Joshua Purvis** is the new pastor of **Wagarville Church**. He holds a bachelor's degree in music education from the University of South Alabama in Mobile and is currently pursuing a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Ambraly. ☩

Alabama's AG supports First Amendment case

Can the government force photographers to photograph same-sex wedding ceremonies, even if they are against their religious beliefs? The office of Attorney General Luther Strange doesn't think so and filed a legal brief in mid-December 2013 to petition for the United States Supreme Court to take a case that went through New Mexico's court system.

In 2006, Vanessa Willock asked Elaine Huguenin — co-owner with her husband of Elane Photography — to photograph a same-sex commitment ceremony between Willock and another woman. Huguenin declined because same-sex "marriage" contradicts her religious beliefs.

Willock filed a complaint with the New Mexico Human Rights Commission accusing Elane Photography of discrimination based on "sexual orientation." The commission found that Elane Photography broke the law and ordered the business to pay \$6,637.94 in attorneys' fees to the two women who filed the complaint.

The Huguenins appealed through the New Mexico court system — arguing that fining them violates the First Amendment.

Strange filed a legal brief Dec. 13, joined by Attorney Generals from seven other states, in support of Huguenin's petition to take the case to the Supreme Court.

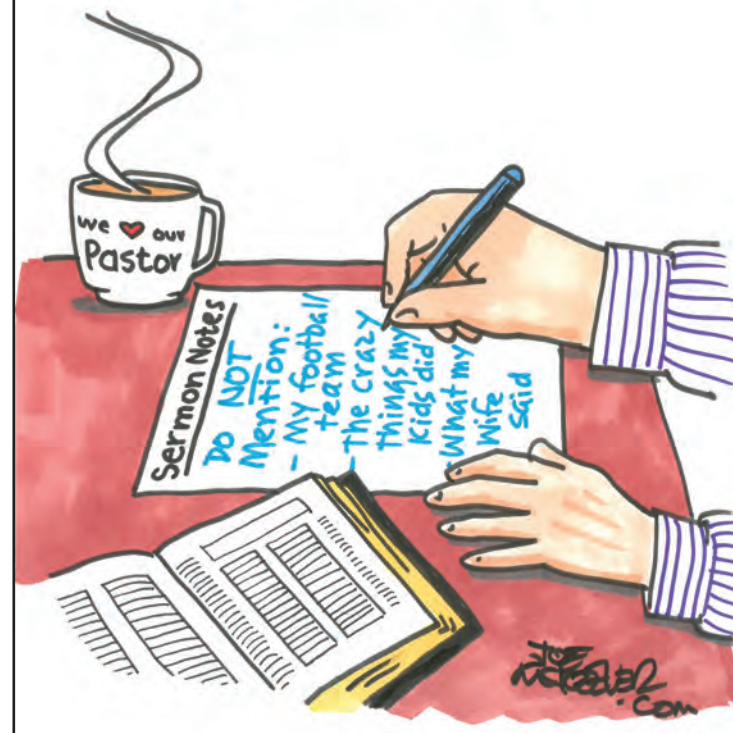
The brief argues that the First Amendment forbids New Mexico from coercing the Huguenins to

photograph a same-sex ceremony.

The brief states in part: "By compelling Elane Photography to photograph ... the ceremony, New Mexico is unconstitutionally requiring the photographer to create ... approval, validation and celebration of the ceremony." (AGO)

REFLECTIONS

(Preacher Rules)



— Correction —

The Dec. 5 article titled "Rainer to retire after 31 years in music ministry" stated that Ron Rainer had served for 31 years in ministry. Rainer served for 43 years in music ministry before retiring.

'Celebrate where you are'

'Be just, merciful, humble,' Vines tells Samford graduates

Health care insurance official Tim Vines told Samford University graduates they should "rejoice" in their accomplishment and strive to make a difference in the world.

"Rejoice to celebrate where you are," Vines said, "but remember the sacrifice of others that helped you get there."

Vines, chief administrative officer of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, addressed a fall graduating class of about 250 in Wright Center at Samford in Birmingham on Dec. 14, 2013. About 1,800 attended the ceremony.

Vines encouraged the graduates to "resist the temptation to complain" but rather to "go out and make a difference" by working for change. "My encouragement is that you will be a blessing to others," he said. "Be just, be merciful, be humble."

Vines, a member of the Samford board of trustees, asked the graduates to stress "honesty, integrity and uprightness" in their lives. "Be the best that you can be."

A graduate of Auburn University with a degree in finance, Vines is a member of various community service boards and is a deacon and Sunday School

teacher at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland recognized two

members of the class who Dec. 13 were commissioned as second lieutenants in the U.S. Air Force through Samford's AFROTC program: Diana Kathleen Hudson and Jaime Lee Richter, both nursing majors. They received a rousing ovation.

Samford provost and executive vice president J. Bradley Creed told the newest graduates of Samford's Beeson Divinity School that, like Jesus, they will always be going places.

Willing to be sent

But to follow Jesus Christ's command to go, one must be willing to be sent, and that is different from being willing to go, Creed said during Beeson's fall commencement Dec. 4.

"When you are sent, you really start to go places," said Creed, who advised the graduates that

they must freely receive before they can freely give and be sent.

Beeson's 23-member fall graduating class included one

master of arts in theological studies degree recipient, 19 master of divinity degree recipients and three doctor of ministry degree recipients.

In addition to a diploma each graduate received a copy of the Holy Scriptures, a gesture that underscores that the commencement

program was a combination graduation ceremony and consecration service.

As is Beeson tradition, a shipment of Bibles has been sent to a missions field in the name of the graduating class. This time Bibles in the Khalkh language will go to an unreached people group in northern Mongolia, where recent Beeson graduate Gantumur Badrakh and his wife, Deeggi, work with Cru. The Scriptures will be distributed to the Tsaatan people in the most remote part of the subarctic taiga. (Samford)



VINES

About Alabama

Alabama's First Class pre-kindergarten program

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Students who participate as 4-year-olds in Alabama's First Class pre-K program outperform their peers academically once they reach elementary school, and the advantage persists at least through the sixth grade, according to findings from an ongoing evaluation of the program by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA).

PARCA's research is part of efforts by the Office of School Readiness in the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs to document the effects of the program, which is voluntary. The positive effects on test scores are particularly strong for pre-K participants who come from lower-income households.

The findings showed that the achievement gap for low-income sixth graders who had participated in First Class was more than 25 percent smaller than would otherwise be the case. Research results from other states also show positive returns from investing in high-quality early childhood education.

Alabama's First Class pre-K program has been recognized for its high standards. The National Institute for Early Education Research found that Alabama met all 10 of its benchmarks for quality, including having high learning standards in place and requiring pre-K teachers to have a bachelor's degree and training in early childhood education.

First Class is operated by schools that meet the program's standards. Because the demand for participation is greater than the number of seats available, students are randomly selected from the applicant pool.

In fall 2013 the program was expanded when the Legislature decided to increase funding from \$19 million to \$28 million. But even with the expansion, First Class is relatively small. About 5,500 children will be served this year at 310 sites across the state, or about 9 percent of the state's 4-year-olds.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. He may be contacted at jwilliam@samford.edu.

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

This morning I received a call from Angela Griffin. Her family started Thomas Abstract in 1887, in north Alabama. Over the years she's closed several reverse mortgages for me.

She called to let me know she had given my name and number to some folks who could benefit from doing a reverse mortgage. I know she closes loans for other companies, so why did she give them my name? I wasn't surprised when she said she'd recommended me because she could tell I treated my customers the way I wanted to be treated. She also said some of the other companies were trying to make a killing, but she could tell I wasn't.

Now since FHA has strict regulations regarding compensation, how can I give folks better deals than my competition? I'll be frank with you. There is a determining factor in a reverse mortgage. It determines how much money a homeowner receives. Right

now that factor on all my current loans is at or below FHA's floor of 5.06%. If I choose a rate of 2.25% today, that will make the factor go above the floor and the homeowner gets less money. If I give a rate of 2.125%, the homeowner gets considerable more money.

Some folks may say to themselves, "Oh, I'm going to call and request a rate of 2.125%." Well, okay, go ahead. Although, I may not be able to get that rate, because we get new rates every Tuesday, and I'm writing this on Dec. 16, 2013. I promise, however, to try and get you more money than any competitor.

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure, quote or DVD, contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



Jimmy Dixon



Photo courtesy of Luke 4:18 Fellowship

MOBILE'S LUKE 4:18 FELLOWSHIP DEDICATES NEW BUILDING

Luke 4:18 Fellowship, Mobile, dedicated its new building Oct. 13. The Mobile Baptist Association church began meeting in Davidson High School in 2008 with no long-term plan, just wanting to be a place for people to gather and learn about Jesus, according to its website. It did not become an official church with a constitution and bylaws until January 2009. Fred Wolfe is pastor.



— Paid Advertising —

In-person vs. video

Most Americans prefer real-live preaching, LifeWay survey shows

Most Americans still prefer a real-live preacher to a video sermon, according to a survey by LifeWay Research. About a third (35 percent) say they will only visit churches with a live sermon, according to research released Dec. 17, 2013. Three in 10 say a video sermon won't keep them from a church, but they still prefer live preaching. The same number say live or video sermons are fine.

Less than 1 percent prefer to watch a video sermon. "I don't think anyone gets up on a Sunday morning saying, 'Boy, I'd really like to watch a video sermon,'" said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research and author of "Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation."

"But the fact that many churches utilize video sermons means other factors such as relationships, preaching approach, music, relevance and location can be more important," McConnell said.

The sermon question was part of a telephone survey of 1,001 Americans conducted in September 2013 by LifeWay Research.

Video sermons are mostly used by multi-site churches, which hold services in more than one location, often called campuses. The campuses frequently have live music, prayers and a local pastor who does everything but preach.

About half of the estimated 5,000 multi-site churches in the U.S. use video teaching, said Jim Tomberlin of the consulting firm MultiSite Solutions.

Larger churches are more likely to use video sermons, Tomberlin said, noting that

many large churches already project an image of their preacher on a big screen. So when they open a new campus people are already accustomed to seeing a video image of their pastor.

Younger Americans are more likely to accept a video sermon. More than a third (37 percent) of those age 18 to 29 say it doesn't matter if the preaching is live or by video.

By contrast, only about a fourth of those 45 to 54 (24 percent) or those over 65 (26 percent) say they are fine with both options.

Debating the use of video

Researchers also found that those in the Northeast are most open to a video sermon, with 40 percent saying they are fine with either an in-person or video sermon.

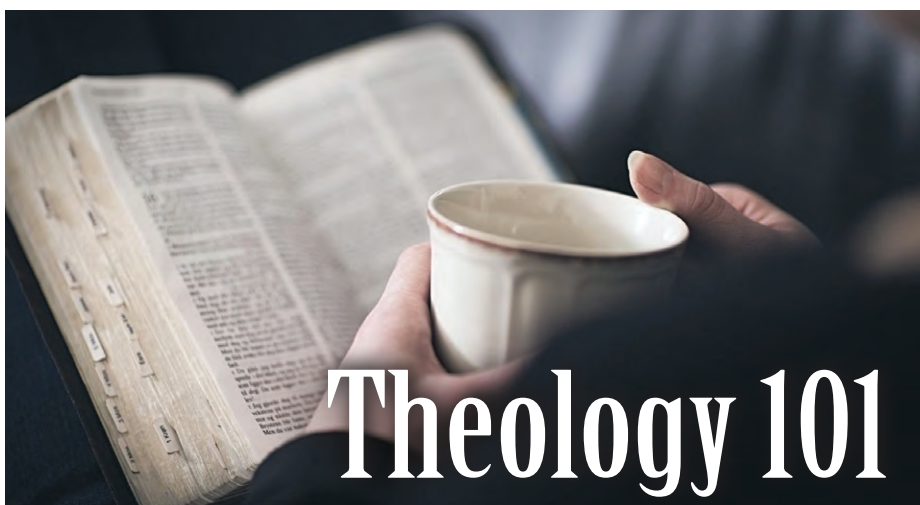
Ken Langley, president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and an adjunct professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., is skeptical about video sermons.

The sermon is part of the church's worship, and it's incomplete if the preacher isn't there, said Langley, who also serves as pastor of Christ Community Church, Zion, Ill. Langley said he sometimes makes changes to the sermon while preaching, depending on who is listening.

"You can't do that when you are preaching to a camera," Langley said.

But Tomberlin points to the example of Billy Graham, whose crusade sermons were sometimes filmed and broadcast. People still connected with Graham's message even though they were watching it at home.

"God could still work, even if Graham wasn't in the room," Tomberlin said. (BP)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Addressing Fuzziness

By Jerry Batson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

An article in *The Alabama Baptist* a few months ago referenced a group that was "indifferent to doctrine and surprisingly fuzzy on Jesus." I could not help but wonder if that phrase applied to Baptists. We might hope that indifference to Bible doctrines is rare in our churches, but indicators point to Baptists having their share of people who are "indifferent to doctrine and fuzzy on Jesus."

How would you answer Jesus' question in Matthew 22:47, "What do you think about the Christ?" What indeed do we believe about Christ? The doctrine of Christ, His person and His work, His mission and His message, lies at the core of what we believe.

Each week I will attempt to lead us into a deeper thinking on our Christian faith as we take brief excursions into Theology 101. Our goal will be to move each of us along in our understandings of what the Bible teaches and reduce any fuzziness about Christian theology we might have.

In the weeks between now and Easter, Theology 101 will be thinking about Jesus — or as would be said in the theology class, we will be studying Christology — the doctrine of Christ.

Where might we begin our thinking? We could survey what good and godly Christians have said about Jesus in years gone by. Thus Christian history could help us to think closely and profitably about Him. We could read what writers are saying in current publications. This too would help sharpen our thoughts

about Jesus, either by embracing what has the ring of truth about it or by clarifying to ourselves what we believe to be truth as the basis for what we might reject.

While we often profit from what other Christ followers say, the Theology 101 features will focus sharply on what God's Word says.

The underlying conviction in Theology 101 is that the Bible is totally true and utterly trustworthy. Therefore it must have the last word, as well as the first word — and for that matter every word in between.

Starting point

But the Bible has 66 books, so where should we begin? In one of the 39 Old Testament books that pre-date but anticipate the coming of Christ the Messiah? In one of the 27 New Testament books that tell of His presence and later of His impact in the first century? Obviously the starting point demands narrowing.

The chosen starting point, from which we will later branch out, will be what the Gospel of John says about Jesus, as well as what it tells us Jesus said about Himself. What did He come to do? How did He present Himself? What do His words reveal about His person as well as His mission? In the interest of further narrowing, the articles that appear each week until Easter will begin with what the opening verses of the fourth Gospel tell us when it refers to Jesus as "the Word," declaring "In the beginning was the Word."

See you in class next week. Be sure to bring your Bible. ☞

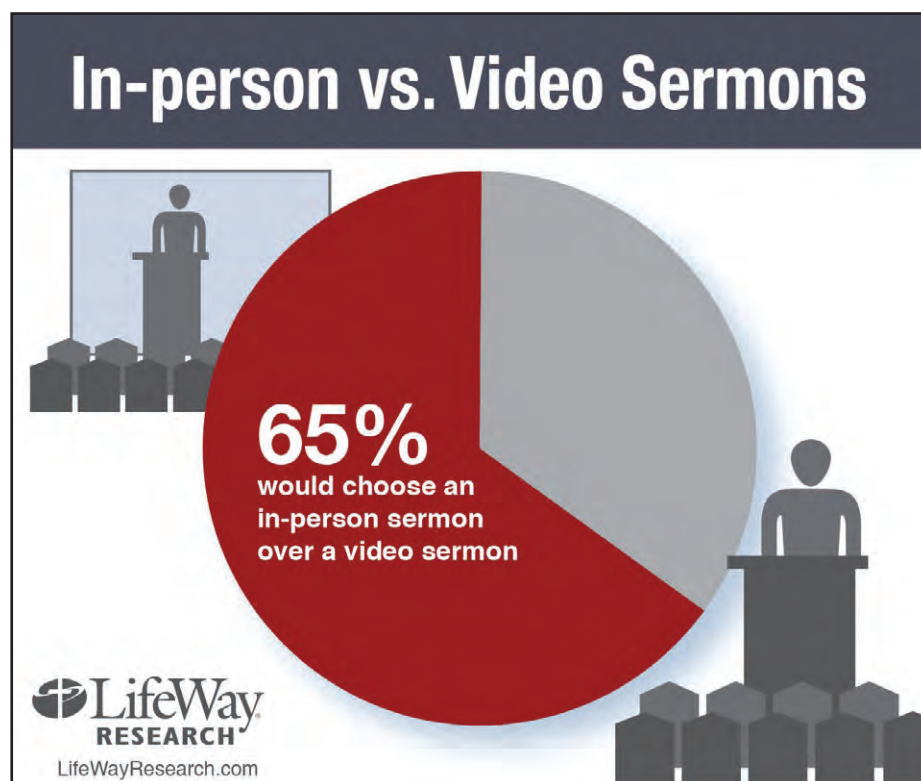
A native of Bessemer, Jerry Batson is a graduate of Samford University (B.A., 1959) and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (B.D., 1963; Th.D., 1970). He has served pastorates in Alabama, Texas, Maryland and Florida.



From 1989 to his retirement in 2008, Batson was on the faculty of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University serving as associate dean for academic affairs as well as teaching courses in New Testament and Greek. He previously taught on the faculties of Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) and Mobile College (now the University of Mobile).

Batson writes regularly for LifeWay Christian Resources publications such as Open Windows, Biblical Illustrator and adult quarterlies.

He currently serves as pastor of First Baptist Church, McCalla. He has been married to Pat for 55 years and has three adult children and seven grandchildren.



CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Professor's Writings in Two Books on Religion:** Judson College's Scott W. Bullard, vice president and academic dean, published his latest works in a pair of books about worship in the Baptist church.

"Remembering the Body, the Lord's Supper and Ecclesial Unity in the Free Church Tradition" was released in November 2013.

The book offers a fresh perspective on the Lord's Supper.

Bullard also wrote the essay, "Communing Together: Baptists Worshipping in the Eucharist," which appears in the book, "Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship," released in September.

► **Judson College Equestrian Teams Finish Strong:** Judson College equestrian teams traveled to Berry College in Rome, Ga., to compete in shows Nov. 16, 2013. Team members finished high in the standings in a variety of events.

Sophomore Katie McQuaig, of Cumming, Ga., placed fourth in the event. In Beginner Walk-Trot-Canter, freshman Sheila Palmer, of Hoover, placed first; freshman Alexandra Huber, of Mechanicsburg, Pa., placed second; senior Rebecca Malphurs, of Dothan, placed third.

Freshman Lindsay Tubbs, of Brent, placed third in Beginner Western Horsemanship. The Judson team will be traveling to Georgia Tech on Feb. 8 for its next show.

► **Judson College's Athletics Program Lands Two Soccer Stand-Outs:** Judson College soccer coach Ken Headley is looking forward to the fall 2014 season, when two highly touted players will join the women's soccer team.

The latest recruits are Raichele Langford and Haley Quick, both from Madison County. Langford is a forward and midfielder and Quick is a midfielder.

► **Judson College Awards Crawford Scholarship to Music Student:** Judson College has



TINDALE

awarded the first Gloria Huey Crawford Scholarship to Courtney Tindale, of Bremen. Tindale is the daughter of William and Connie Tindale and a 2010 graduate of Cold Springs High School.

Tindale transferred to Judson from Wallace State Community College in Hanceville. She is majoring in music and psychology at

Judson and is involved in choir and intramural field hockey.

► **Judson College Awards Lee Scholarship to Soccer Student:** Judson has awarded the ninth annual



MILLIRON

Mary Whitfield Lee Scholarship to Mary Milliron, of Alabaster.

Milliron is the daughter of Leif and Amy Milliron. She is a 2012 graduate of Thompson High School. At Judson, she is majoring in mathematics and English; she also is on the soccer team.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Selected Among "America's 100 Best College Buys":** The University of Mobile (UMobile) has been selected as one of "America's 100 Best College Buys" for the fifth consecutive year.

UMobile is one of only four colleges in Alabama to receive the 2013-2014 "Best Buy" designation and the only private university in the state selected through the

annual survey administered by Institutional Research & Evaluation Inc.

UMobile was selected for the top 100 list from among 1,040 accredited U.S. colleges and universities surveyed.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford University's Westmoreland Elected SACSCOC Board Chair:** Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland has been elected chair of the board of trustees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). He will serve during 2014.



WESTMORELAND

SACSCOC is the regional body in 11 Southern states for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees. There currently are 802 institutions accredited by SACSCOC.

Want to know God?

By Pastor Brad Doss
Grace Baptist Church, Fayette

Do you feel accepted? Oftentimes we feel that we are not in the know or that we are not in the loop. We all know how that feels. Feelings of rejection, feelings of being alone — these feelings are not made up or dreamed up. They are real.

We try to break through with friendships and other means to be accepted but to no avail. Think about a man that was all alone with no friend, no one to help, no one to talk to. But yet, every day he tried to break through without fail. Every day he wanted to be accepted. Everyone else was able to walk, talk and to move about, but not him. For 38 years he persevered but could not move forward. Then along came this man named Jesus who looked at the man and said, "What would you have Me do?"

All the man wanted to do was to walk, to belong, to be accepted. Jesus, showing His love and compassion, told him to pick up his bed and walk. No more would the man be paralyzed by his sin, his pain, his feeling of uselessness.

This world will make you feel as if you are not accepted, not of the right crowd, the right tax bracket or even the right neighborhood. Then there is Jesus, who came to accept you, to give you eternal life, to make you part of the family and to tell you that there is no man who can save you except Him.

He is looking at you now asking, "What would you have Me do?" Haven't you sat by long enough? Haven't you been on the outside looking in long enough? I know nobody's perfect. But we are a family and He wants to make you a part of that family.

Would you today, just as He has accepted you, accept Him as your Lord?

Would you today, right now, pray this prayer?

Heavenly Father, I know I am a sinner, forgive me of my sin. I have been sitting by too long. Jesus I make You the Lord of my life, come into my heart and save me.

If you prayed that prayer and you meant it, it's time to pick up your bed and walk. You are now part of a family, you are accepted.

I pray that you will find a Baptist church and tell the pastor you just got saved. 🙏

MARKET PLACE

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: The Fellowship, a southern Baptist church, in Albertville, Ala., is seeking a seminary degreed pastor. Our pastor should be able to express a vision for the church and demonstrate an ability to care for and love others. Ten years experience leading a mid-sized church with a contemporary style of worship is a plus. If the Spirit leads you to apply you may do so at scl@fellowshipal.com.

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.

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 resumé to: Patsburg Pulpit Committee, P.O. Box 544, Luverne, AL 36049.

WORSHIP LEADER: Hepzibah Baptist Church is currently seeking an experienced Christian minister to lead our congregation in a blended worship service of traditional and contemporary music as well as develop and oversee music and educational programs. A minimum of a bachelor's degree in music, church music or related field is required. Send resumé to: 5546 Renfroe Road, Talladega, AL 35160.

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.

FULL-TIME YOUTH PASTOR: Whorton Bend Baptist Church is searching for youth pastor/leader. Please send resumé to: Joey Jones, pastor, joeyjones@bellsouth.net or call 256-312-6455.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER: Hillabee Baptist Church in Alexander City is seeking a bivocational youth minister. Please submit resumé to: hillabeebc@yahoo.com.

FAMILY PASTOR: Country & Town Baptist Church, Mechanicsburg, Pa., is seeking a passionate, catalytic leader to join our team as a family pastor, responsible for the discipleship of our children and outreach to individuals and families. For details and application information, visit our website: www.ctbc.org. Please do not call the church.

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 resumé to: P.O. Box 823, Oneonta, AL 35121.

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIRLIFTS: Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TIME TO REPLACE THAT OLD CHURCH SIGN?: Reliable Sign Services, a Christian-operated, full-service sign company for two decades, is ready to assist you as you expand your church sign ministry. From electronic message boards to traditional signs, Reliable will fabricate and install statewide or ship anywhere. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

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

MOVING? LOCAL, STATEWIDE OR LONG DISTANCE: Coleman American/Allied Van Lines. Special rate and

programs for Alabama Baptist ministers, staff and church members. Contact Gary Washington at 205-540-7470 or gary.washington@covan.com.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

BIBLE LAND DEPARTURES: 100s of Bible Land departures catering to Southern Baptists — Israel, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, Jordan, Egypt, etc. www.pilgrimgtours.com, 1-800-322-0788.

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

DESTIN OR PENSACOLA BEACH FRONT RESORT: Fully furnished, luxury beachfront resort. Great rates. Family-oriented condos sleep 4 to 8. Call 1-800-874-0402. HolidayBeachResort.com.

FOR SALE

BUS: 2001 Chevrolet 25-passenger bus. 35,663 miles. Call 256-310-5161.

in Loving
Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Richard G. Cook Sr.

Pastor, retired military chaplain dies

Richard G. Cook Sr., a pastor and retired military chaplain who spent his last years in Alabama, died Nov. 29. He was 86.



COOK

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Mary Grace; four children; six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Cook, who served in the military for more than 30 years and attained the rank of colonel, developed the first organized statewide volunteer chaplaincy program in the Southern Baptist Convention in Florida. Through the program, 260 chaplains were enlisted, trained and assigned to 204 facilities throughout Florida.

Cook was a member of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, at the time of his death.

Legalizing polygamy

Portion of anti-polygamy law struck down by federal court

A federal court has struck down a vital section of Utah's anti-polygamy law, lending credence to arguments by defenders of marriage that the reshaping of the institution would not end with legalizing same-sex "unions."

Clark Waddoups, a judge in the U.S. District Court of Utah, invalidated a portion of the state law that prohibits bigamy, essentially decriminalizing polygamy in the process. In a 91-page opinion released Dec. 13, the federal judge ruled as unconstitutional a section prohibiting a married person from cohabiting with someone who is not his or her spouse.

In effect, Waddoups legalized polygamy as it is practiced in Utah primarily by members of fundamentalist spinoffs of the Mormon religion. Such polygamous households typically do not have multiple marriage licenses but treat all relationships between a man and the women with whom he lives as marriages. Waddoups ruled the cohabitation section of Utah's anti-polygamy law violated the free religious exercise clause of the United States Constitution's First Amendment and the due process clause of the 14th Amendment.

'Sister Wives'

The ruling came in a lawsuit filed by Kody Brown and his four wives, who are featured in the television reality show "Sister

Wives" on TLC. Brown and only one of his wives have a marriage license. They are members of the Apostolic United Brethren, which believes polygamy is "a core religious practice," according to Waddoups' opinion.

Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said in a statement released Dec. 14, "Sadly when marriage is elastic enough to mean anything, in due time it comes to mean nothing.

"This is what happens when marriage becomes about the emotional and sexual wants of adults," Moore said. "Polygamy was outlawed in this country because it was demonstrated, again and again, to hurt women and children."

The opinion also followed by less than six months the U.S. Supreme Court's June ruling that struck down a section of a federal law defining marriage as only between a man and a woman.

In that opinion, the justices said the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act violated "equal protection" under the Constitution by

refusing to recognize gay "marriages."

Waddoups, in his ruling, took issue with a 1973 state law that says a "person is guilty of bigamy when, knowing he has a husband or wife or knowing the other person has a husband or wife, the person purports to marry another person or cohabits with another person."

In writing about what he called "religious cohabitation," Waddoups upheld the "purports to

marry another person" language while striking "cohabits with another person."

To save the law, Waddoups adopted a narrow interpretation of "purports to marry," thereby allowing it "to remain in force as prohibiting bigamy in the literal sense — the fraudulent or otherwise impermissible possession of two purported-

ly valid marriage licenses for the purpose of entering into more than one purportedly legal marriage."

Waddoups demonstrated a reliance on *Lawrence v. Texas*, a 2003 high court opinion that struck down state laws barring homosexual conduct.

Waddoups quoted the *Lawrence* ruling, which said, "Liberty presumes an autonomy of self that includes freedom of thought, belief, expression and certain intimate conduct."

Some women who have left polygamous marriages in Utah criticized the decision, however.

"I don't think there's any good polygamy," Kristyn Decker told *The Salt Lake Tribune* in a Dec. 15 article. Decker abandoned polygamy after 50 years in the Apostolic United Brethren.

The problems with polygamy include the fostering of abuse, especially of women and children, and coercion of women in polygamous communities, Decker said. Their salvation is based on their belief in polygamy, women are taught in such communities, and they face ouster from their families if they disagree, she told *The Tribune*.

The text of the ruling can be accessed at www.scribd.com/doc/191414121/Sister-Wives-Ruling. (BP)

"Polygamy was outlawed in this country because it was demonstrated ... to hurt women and children."

**Russell D. Moore
president, ERLC**

THE PRODUCERS OF THE THEATRICAL HIT *THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS* PRESENT

CS LEWIS THE GREAT DIVORCE

JAN 11: SAT 4PM & 8PM
ALABAMA THEATRE, 1817 3RD AVENUE N, BIRMINGHAM
3 Ways to Order Online: GreatDivorceOnStage.com/Tix
Call: 1-800-745-3000 In Person: Alabama Theatre Box Office (Opens 90 minutes prior to performances)
Tix: \$49, \$39, \$29 Save on Groups of 10 or More! Call 1-866-476-8707
Service/venue fees apply. Student Tix: Purchase at Box Office. Valid student ID required.
Produced by Fellowship for the Performing Arts - Max McLean, Artistic Director

World's Largest Walk-in Bath Store

Wholesale prices Starting at \$2,399

Best Bath
Extra large tubs in stock!

Best Bath
10,000 sqft showroom!

Handicap showers!

Luter's Supply
Tylertown, MS

- 18 walk-in baths on display
- Hundreds in stock
- 5 brands & over 70 models
- 60 years in business
- Free shipping on walk-in tubs

1-800-264-4902 www.LuterSupply.com



Photo courtesy of MetaCamp

MetaCamp's new Lake Martin facility will hold its first one-week module Jan. 27–31.

Training believers

MetaCamp teaches 'ordinary' believers to be 'effective'

(continued from page 1)

And he said he hopes they might also catch a vision for taking the gospel to some of the world's unreached peoples.

The first module focuses on being and making disciples who multiply.

"It helps people start simple house churches," Sergeant said.

'Fruitfully implementing'

The second module, aimed at people who have been "fruitfully implementing" the first, teaches how to multiply house churches and steward a house church movement, he said.

Other modules offer training in missions, working with oral learners and implementing holistic ministry with disciple making.

"It's very participatory and experiential," Sergeant said.

"The learning for most modules is done in pairs and small groups."

Mike Wagner, who attended one of the first MetaCamp training sessions in spring 2012, said what he gained from the experience "far exceeded" his expectations.

He and his wife serve as church planting expedition leaders and strategists for e3 Partners in India, Rwanda and the U.S.

"MetaCamp most strongly affected our problem-solving capacity," Wagner said.

MetaCamp will hold its first one-week module at its new Lake Martin facility Jan. 27–31. Until now Sergeant, who also served with e3 Partners and as director of church planting at Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., has been teaching the modules to groups in his Alabama home.

For more information, call Sergeant at 214-802-6850 or visit www.metacamp.org.

Radio host who predicted world's end dies

Harold Camping, the radio preacher who convinced thousands of followers that Jesus would return on May 21, 2011, to usher in the end of the world, has died, according to a statement released Dec. 16 by his Family Radio network. He was 92.

Camping died Dec. 15. He had fallen at his home Nov. 30 and had been in weak health due to a stroke since 2011.

Camping first predicted Jesus' return in 1994, but his most recent forecasts gained national attention through advertisements and the Family Radio network of stations he founded. He warned that "judgment day" would occur in May 2011 and said the world would end in October 2011.

When his prophecies turned out to be false, he declared in March 2012 that his May 21 prediction had been "incorrect and sinful" and said his ministry would get out of the predictions business.

The ministry sold its prominent stations and laid off staffers, with

assets dropping from \$135 million in 2007 to \$29.2 million in 2011.

Pressed by reporters after his May 21 prediction failed to materialize, Camping said he had miscalculated — it must be Oct. 21, he said. "I'm not a genius," he said. "I pray all the time for wisdom."

Starting in the 1950s, Camping broadcast his views via Family Radio, a global network of Christian stations for which he served as unpaid president and primary

on-air talent. His teachings aired worldwide five nights a week via "Open Forum," a call-in show that draws listeners as far away as China and Ghana.

Camping was once well-regarded in among evangelicals, both for his encyclopedic knowledge of Scripture and his radio network. But in the late 1980s, when he began teaching that churches had strayed from the Bible embracing a false doctrine, he lost much previous support. (RNS)

Complete bathroom remodel

Owners personally handle all sales & installation



- Handicap Showers
- Walk-in Tubs
- Acrylic Tubs
- Comfort Height Toilets
- Anti-slip Floors
- Safety Supports
- Widen Doors
- Quality Painting
- Shower Doors

334-361-7139 • 205-389-6346 • www.acrylic-1.com

Call for FREE estimates



World of RELIGION

Compiled from Wire Services

New hospital vessel to be built for Mercy Ships

BEIJING, China — Mercy Ships has announced that it has reached an agreement with shipbuilding firms to purpose-build a new hospital ship for Mercy Ships. The ship will have a total internal volume of 36,600-GRT. Contracts were signed between China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation and Donald K. Stephens, president/founder of Mercy Ships with Mercy Ships Marine Operations.

The vessel will be built at the group's Tianjin Xingang Shipyard. "We are thrilled to formally secure this important milestone for a project we have worked on quietly for quite some time," Stephens said. "Our goal with this second Mercy Ship is to more than double the hope and healing through life-changing surgeries provided to those with little access to specialized health care and to increase the partnership of training and educational support of health professionals within the developing nations our ships will continue to serve."

The new Mercy Ship will be classed by Lloyd's Register and flagged by Malta.

England recognizes Church of Scientology marriages

LONDON, England — Britain's highest court ruled Dec. 11, 2013, that Scientology is a religion, giving a 25-year-old woman and her fiancé the legal rights to marry at the church's headquarters in London.

Louisa Hodkin appealed to the Supreme Court after a lower court ruled that services run by Scientologists were not acts of worship.

In his ruling, Supreme Court Justice Lord Roger Toulson wrote that religions should not be confined to those with belief in a supreme deity.

The Church of Scientology was not a party to the legal action, but the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling is seen as an important victory for an organization often described by British academics, lawyers and theologians as either a harmless philosophy or a dangerous cult.

Croatians initiate referendum to preserve marriage

ZAGERB, Croatia — In the nation's first-ever, citizen-initiated referendum, Croatians asked their government to preserve marriage as the union of a man and a woman, by a vote of 65.8 percent in mid-December 2013. Larry Jacobs, a spokesman for the World Congress of Families, observed: "This is all the more impressive in light of the opposition from Croatia's left-wing government and biased media."

He noted that supporters of the referendum collected more than 750,000 signatures.

Two weeks later the Croatian cabinet approved a new law that grants homosexual couples the same rights as heterosexual couples. The law has yet to be passed by parliament.

Thompson Sound, Inc.

Installing Excellence in
SOUND • LIGHTING • VIDEO

256.974.SOUND (7686)
www.thompsonsound.com

Our goal in business and in life is to glorify Jesus Christ and spread the good news of His grace.

Like us



Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Clearing the clutter starts with me

It's that time of year again — time to start fresh, set new goals, attempt to improve.

Could this be the best year yet? Or at least could I be the best me yet?

I'm sure going to give it a shot, starting with answering the questions in Rashional Extras (this page, top right).

Working with these questions related to our relationship with God and others should help keep our focus properly aligned. It is certainly a different approach from setting goals such as adapting a proper eating plan, exercising more and kicking bad habits. Those are good goals to have and most of us should still try to achieve them, but think about the true joy we could experience and impact we might have by primarily focusing on our relationship with God and others. What if we really could take all of our spiritual disciplines to new levels?

What is the spiritual discipline I want to make the most progress in this year? Prayer.

What am I going to do about it? Practice it more, read about it more and seek God's direction through His Word.

I'm a doer naturally. When I see a need, I take care of it — whether it's my responsibility or not. I enjoy helping others and serving in areas that are sometimes neglected.

I'm also a problem-solver. If something needs taken care of, then I'm your gal. I rarely hesitate. I simply take care of it.

Could be annoying

I'm also full of ideas — to an annoying level sometimes. Inviting me to a brainstorming session will guarantee lots of ideas floating around, but it also may mean that I'll just go ahead and solve the problem while we are sitting there, thus leaving no reason to review the list of ideas.

Sure this helps account for my need for efficiency and means I am a really hard worker, but as one of my mentors frequently reminds me: "strength overdone becomes weakness."

Spending time in prayer and seeking God's direction about the issue before me is where I need to improve. It's too easy for me to make the decision quickly and go with it.

One particular area currently in front of me is how I can be a better church member and help our church leaders make some important decisions that lie ahead of us.

Sharing, serving

Some of the moves that need to be made are obvious, but others are not.

How can we as a church family grow and develop in the best way to help our members deepen their relationships with Christ as well as advance the gospel through praying, giving and going?

How can we serve and offer areas of service without overwhelming our members, whose lives are already packed with activities at all levels?

Is it possible to actually break the 80-20 rule that we so easily accept — 20 percent of the people doing 80 percent of the work? And does that apply to giving and going as well? What about praying?

What if every person who walked in the front door of the church came to truly worship God and grow as an individual believer? What if the appearance on Sunday morning wasn't because of a cultural obligation or to be seen or for purely social reasons?

What if we all emptied ourselves and allowed God to fill us? What if we listened to His guidance and followed in obedience? How amazing would our church services be, and how amazing would our service to the world outside the church be?

And while the go-getter in me wants to push the masses to embrace this same vision, I realize I must start with a time of prayer.

I have to clear the clutter from my own heart and mind and settle all of this within myself before I can ask others to consider a similar path. ☮

Rashional Extras...

What topics are on your mind?

Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

"Sinners sin. Did you know that? You and I have the commission to spread the good news, as individuals, as Christians, as churches. ... The first order of business is prayer. It is a necessity. Effective prayer happens when we humble ourselves and seek God's face, not our own ambitions. It is God's plan for God's people for His purpose in His power and will always reveal to us His presence when done that way."

Brett Clements
Pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church
Cherokee Baptist Association

"Imagine what would happen if people in our world — by the masses — took up serving towels, draped them over their arms and willingly (even joyfully) served other people in their everyday lives. Such attitudes and actions would change our world."

Bill Hybels
Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church,
Chicago

"If we lay awake at night concerned about souls, anguishing for lost folks, can you imagine the changes we would see? ... Soul winning starts by just asking folks, 'Are you saved?'"

Jason Gravette
Pastor of Hollins Baptist Church
Central Baptist Association

"Jesus preached what He practiced. He did it then taught it."

Rick Lance
Executive director
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

"Theology should drive methodology."

Jason Dees
Pastor of Valleydale Church
Birmingham Baptist Association

Questions to ask for the new year

Adapted from <http://www.ampersandphotoblog.com/2013/01/03/thursday-q-a-2013-goals-planning/>

- ▶ What's one thing you could do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?
- ▶ What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your relationships this year?
- ▶ In which spiritual discipline do you most want to make progress this year, and what will you do about it?
- ▶ What is the single biggest time-waster in your life, and what will you do about it this year?
- ▶ For whose salvation will you pray most fervently this year?
- ▶ What's the most important way you will, by God's grace, try to make this year different from last year?
- ▶ What one thing could you do to improve your prayer life this year?
- ▶ What single thing that you plan to do this year will matter most in 10 years? In eternity?

Our quest

"Each one of us is growing toward eternal life. It is taking on more each day the character of the almighty God, to look like our Father. ... For every believer, it ought to be an accepted fact that to believe in Jesus puts one in a quest of growing, to grow in the likeness of Jesus.

"It is not skin deep. ... God looks at the heart. He looks deep within our soul, to who we are within our heart. It is deep down in the realm of attitude. An attitude toward God Himself.

"The means of growth are private prayer, private Bible study, meditating on the Word and allowing the Spirit to move in our being, careful examination, confessing sins before a holy God, regular gathering in public worship — not allowing anything in our lives to prevent us from gathering together in God's house with God's people.

"A godly person takes God seriously and has a hunger and thirst for God. No day is complete without sitting with God and then getting up and walking with Him."

Dee McGuire
Pastor of Greensboro Baptist Church
Hale Baptist Association

A question for Christian believers

"How would Jesus look to the world if His reflection were based on your life? ... We think we are physical beings who are also Christians ... who also have a spiritual life. ... That's not what God called us to be according to His Word. ... We are spiritual beings who have a limited physical time on the planet ... who have been called to be a living, breathing, flesh and blood embodiment of the Lord Jesus Christ as we walk around on the planet and interface with the teeming masses. ... We are spiritual beings ... with powerful opportunities now. ... What if God loved you the way you love others?"

Terry Newberry
www.terrynewberry.com

UPCOMING TOPICS

include multitasking. Send us your experiences with and suggestions on this topic. Email jrash@thealabamabaptist.org or comment on our blog at thealabamabaptist.wordpress.com.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 5

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

DEPEND ON THE SPIRIT John 15:26-16:15

For some, the Holy Spirit seems to be “the forgotten Member of the Trinity.” Many Christians have been taught very little about the reality of the Spirit’s presence and power. Others have witnessed a misguided emphasis on the Holy Spirit or have seen the abuse/misuse of the Spirit’s gifts, so they are leery of too much talk about the Spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit is God’s abiding presence in, among and with Christians. He is the best Gift a believer can ever receive. We can and should depend constantly on His presence and power in living as Jesus’ followers.

When Testimony Meets Hostility (15:26-16:4)

On Thursday night before He was crucified on Friday, Jesus prepared His men for the days ahead when they would face opposition, hostility and persecution. In fact, the hostility will be so intense that those persons who want to kill Christians will think that they are serving God. (See Saul in Acts 8:1 before he became a Christian.) Jesus promised the disciples that, when the Holy Spirit came to them, He would empower them to testify truthfully and faithfully about Jesus, even in situations where their testimony was met with danger.

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as “the Helper.” This term combines the ideas of encouraging, comforting, strengthening, exhorting and advising. These are the various ministries of the Holy Spirit to us, in us and through us. This is seen especially clearly in witnessing: “He will bear witness of Me and you will bear witness also.” We can depend upon the Holy Spirit to give us courage and clarity so that we are enabled to tell about Jesus even in costly circumstances.

When Sorrow Fills the Heart (16:5-7)

Jesus had told the disciples that He was going away (John 14:1-3) and now He had mentioned persecution that was to come in their ministry for Christ. As a result, these men were overwhelmed with sorrow. However, Jesus made it clear that the disciples would

not be left without help and power. In fact, it would be to the advantage of the disciples if Jesus went away; for then He would send the Helper to empower them, to encourage them, to teach them. Of course, the Holy Spirit had been in the world before this, but He was now coming in a new capacity, to convict the world and to minister to the redeemed. The truth is that we can depend upon the Holy Spirit to be present with us and to comfort us whenever our hearts are filled with sorrow.

When Satan Seems in Control (16:8-11)

Jesus explained that the Spirit’s work would include convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. The word “convict” (“reprove” in the KJV) is a legal term referring to the action of an attorney in presenting evidence that convinces a jury to convict an individual. Here it is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to bring about conviction of the need for the Savior. The purpose of this conviction is not to condemn but to save. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of one specific sin, namely, the sin of unbelief, the failure to trust Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. What ultimately condemns people to hell is the unwillingness to trust Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness, in the sense of shattering the pretensions of self-righteousness. The standard of righteousness is Jesus Himself: no one compares with Him. All others are sinners. The presence of the Holy Spirit convicts the world of coming judgment. His presence means Satan has already been condemned at the cross and all who reject the Savior will share Satan’s horrible judgment. The reality of the Holy Spirit brings encouragement to us when Satan seems to be in control.

When More Understanding Is Needed (16:12-15)

Jesus declared that the Spirit would guide His disciples into all truth, empowering them to carry forth the message of the gospel. Therefore we too can depend upon the Holy Spirit to help us understand, apply and tell others about all the truth Jesus reveals.

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

A FIGHT YOU CAN'T WIN BY YOURSELF Romans 7:14-8:2

In Romans 6, Paul wrote of our having “died to sin” (v. 2) and of our being “set free from sin” (vv. 7, 18, 22). Why then do we still struggle with sin? The Christian’s freedom is a freedom from the mastery or tyranny of sin, not from temptations and struggles. Sin is alive and well in this fallen world and in us, living as we do in these bodies of flesh. Though saved and justified by faith in Jesus Christ, we must do battle with sin daily, but we are not in the fight alone.

(7:14-23)

In Romans 7, Paul turns his attention to the law. We have been released from the law in order to give ourselves to Christ (vv. 1-6). So then is the law sin? Not at all, says Paul (v. 7). The law is “holy and righteous and good” (v. 12), showing us what sin is. The real culprit is sin itself, working out its deadly effects via the agency of the law (v. 13). Paul then illustrates his point by writing in an autobiographical fashion.

Paul bears witness to a frustrating, dual reality, common to all believers. On the one hand, he knows what is right and what is wrong and wants to embrace what’s good and shun evil. On the other hand, in spite of what he knows and wants, Paul finds himself failing to do what’s right or to resist the temptations to do what’s wrong. The law is not the culprit (vv. 14, 16). Neither is Paul wholly to blame, but “sin that dwells within me” (vv. 17, 20). This is not “the Devil

made me do it” theology, providing convenient justification for willful acts of disobedience. It is, however, a frank recognition that the struggle with sin continues so long as we live in these bodies of flesh.

(7:24-8:2)

The reality of our ongoing struggle with sin is, quite frankly, discouraging. Even worse, as our desire to obey and please God grows, so also can grow our feelings of defeat when we fall short of the mark. Hence Paul’s cry, “Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Paul, however, was not lamenting defeat, for he spent the better part of chapters 3-5 conveying the message that we are justified by faith. For that reason, Paul’s next cry is: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Though our struggle with sin continues in these “bodies of death,” we have victory over sin through Jesus Christ. In 8:1-2, Paul twice uses the prepositional phrase, “in Christ Jesus.” First in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. We will continue to sin, falling short of the glory of God, but there is no condemnation. God already condemned our sin in Christ and justified us by Christ’s righteousness. Second in Christ Jesus, we have been set free from the law of sin and death. As Paul has shown, we are incapable of attaining right standing before God by the law; it only leads to sin and death. But Jesus set us free from serving that master; He gave us the freedom of right standing before God, that we might live to please Him. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of our victory over sin.

VOICE YOUR OPINION

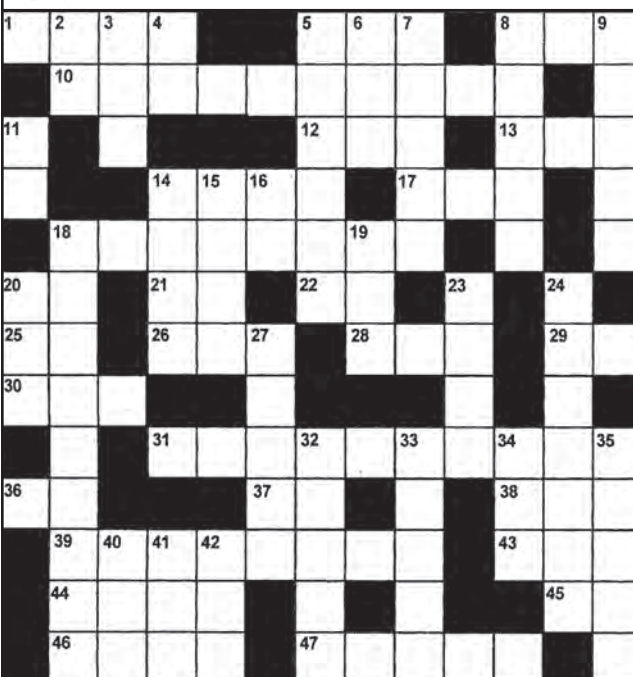
SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

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

Christian Crossword

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

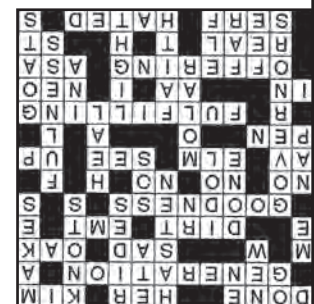


Across

- Works, which were ___ in you. (Matt. 11:21)
- Him and ___.
- Kimberly. (nickname)
- This ... sinful ___. (Mark 8:38)
- Her countenance was no more ___. (1 Sam. 1:18)
- Set it up there under an ___. (Josh. 24:26)
- Whose waters cast up mire and ___. (Isa. 57:20)
- Emergency Medical Technician. (abbr.)
- ___ and mercy shall follow me. (Ps. 23:6)
- Shed ___ blood. (Gen. 37:22)
- There shall be ___ poor among you. (Deut. 15:4)
- Ye have ___ portion ... in Jerusalem. (Neh. 2:20)
- Audiovisual. (abbr.)
- Large tree, largely destroyed by blight.

- Though now ye ___ him not. (1 Pet. 1:8)
- From my youth ___. (Luke 18:21)
- They that handle the ___. (Judg. 5:14)
- Love is the ___ of the law. (Rom. 13:10)
- Not out.
- Support group for those who quit drinking.
- Prefix meaning new.
- Coming to him and ___ him vinegar. (Luke 23:36)
- I ... quieted myself as a child, ___ weaned child. (Ps. 131:2)
- Actual.
- Saint. (abbr.)
- Tenant farmer in the Middle Ages.
- Esau ___ Jacob. (Gen. 27:41)
- (Neh. 10:39)
- Printer's measure.
- See that ye ___ the matter. (2 Chron. 24:5)
- Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
- Jumps on his horse and ___.
- Something a sailor is good at.
- Maketh. (mod.)
- Go on before ___. (1 Sam. 25:19)
- He that is mighty hath ___ ... great things. (Luke 1:49)
- Set ... the ___ ... in the house of God. (2 Chron. 33:7)
- Registered Nurse. (abbr.)
- Ye shall be brought before ___ and kings. (Matt. 10:18)
- Ship's cry of distress.
- To sleep for a little while.
- Stretching forth thine hand to ___. (Acts 4:30)
- In thy presence is ___

- of joy. (Ps. 16:11)
- Tooth.
- The unfeigned ___ that is in thee. (2 Tim. 1:5)
- But if we walk in the ___. (1 John 1:7)
- "Are you coming?" "___ minute."
- He shall set the ___ on the left. (Matt. 25:33)
- Charge for professional services.
- To be with Christ; which is ___ better. (Phil. 1:23)
- Small imaginary being.



TOP 10

best-selling books

FICTION

1. **Fifteen Minutes**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard Books)
2. **Outlaw, Outlaw Series #1**
By Ted Dekker (FaithWords)
3. **The Harbinger**
By Jonathan Cahn (Charisma)
4. **Unspoken**
By Dee Henderson (Baker)
5. **The Shack**
By William P. Young (Windblown)
6. **The Secret Keeper, Home to Hickory Hollow Series #4**
By Beverly Lewis (Baker)
7. **The Chance**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard Books)
8. **Return to Me, Restoration Chronicles Series #1**
By Lynn Austin (Baker)
9. **Cross Roads**
By William P. Young (FaithWords)
10. **Mistletoe Memories**
By Jennifer AllLee, Carla Gade, Lisa Richardson (Baker)

NONFICTION

1. **Jesus Calling**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **Jesus Calling, Large Print Deluxe Edition**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
3. **You'll Get Through This**
By Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)
4. **The Reason for My Hope**
By Billy Graham (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Four Blood Moons**
By John Hagee (Worthy)
6. **Break Out!**
By Joel Osteen (FaithWords)
7. **The Story, NIV**
By Zondervan Staff (Zondervan)
8. **The 5 Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
9. **Jesus Calling, Women's Edition**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
10. **Jesus Calling, Deluxe Edition**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)

Source: Christian Book Expo



Photo courtesy of Merge PR

Actress Candace Cameron Bure, famous for her role in 'Full House,' interviews singer/songwriter Matthew West for 'K-Love Music City Christmas,' which aired on UP Network in December 2013.

Fulfillment in Christ

Former 'Full House' star puts God first in work, family

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

From 1987 to 1995, actress Candace Cameron Bure earned national recognition while starring as D.J. Tanner on the popular TV sitcom "Full House."

Through the years, as the Lord has guided and directed her career choices, Bure has remained focused on keeping the spotlight shining brightly on Christ and seeking roles that will glorify Him.

She also has gained a unique perspective while balancing ministry and motherhood, which has furthered her desire to provide family-friendly entertainment. In addition to her acting roles, Bure often shares her personal testimony at women's conferences and ministry events.

"My faith in Christ is everything to me and influences who I am as a wife, mom, actress and business woman," Bure said. "My relationship with God comes first and I want to honor Him in all that I do in my life, whether it's family or work."

Family-friendly programming

"Clearly that flows into the choices that I make as far as the movies and shows that I do and the content that I produce. I'm so thankful that there are some wonderful networks like UP that are dedicated to providing family-friendly programming, and as an actress, those are the networks that I want to be a part of."

In December 2013, Bure combined her love for

contemporary Christian music and speaking while hosting "K-Love Music City Christmas" on the UP Network (formerly Gospel Music Channel). The show featured special performances from several contemporary Christian recording artists, including David Crowder, Mandisa, Kari Jobe, Colton Dixon, Tenth Avenue North, Toby Mac, Brandon Heath,

Newsboys, for KING & COUNTRY, Big Daddy Weave and Matthew West.

For Bure, a simple Christmas spent with family and serving others keeps her focused on the reason for the season.

"I've learned not to get overwhelmed with the Christmas season by keeping it really simple and meaningful," Bure said. "I enjoy it for what it is, because it is a time to recognize the greatest gift of all and that is the birth of Jesus Christ."

"We started a new tradition in our home where we go as a family, along with some other family members and friends, to a shelter and cook breakfast for the people living

there. Then we have a chance to sit down, talk with them, eat breakfast and spend our Christmas morning with them and give them gifts. Last year, we brought everyone at the shelter Bibles, socks and Christmas CDs. Just being able to sit and listen to their stories has really been special for my whole family.

"It's a special moment as a mom to be teaching my children about the real meaning of Christmas and have them be involved in this way. It really puts Christmas into perspective, and for us, what we look forward to the most is going and serving others on Christmas morning." ❄️



BURE

"My faith in Christ is everything to me and influences who I am."

Candace Cameron Bure
actress

Leader of the 'Swordsmen'

Kentucky pastor's 56 years at Glendale Baptist Church includes leading more than 250 young people into ministry

At age 15, Ronnie Hicks visited Glendale Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Ky., for the first time. As Hicks walked out the door, pastor Richard Oldham sensed God telling him, "I want to use this young man." So Oldham told Hicks that God's hand was on him.

Hicks didn't know what to make of the pastor's words that day but three years later he felt God calling him to preach and committed his life to vocational ministry, with Oldham serving as his mentor through college at Bowling Green's Western Kentucky University. Forty years later, Hicks retired from a career of serving as pastor of Southern Baptist churches and it was clear that Oldham's sense of God's will had been correct.

Hicks is not alone in that experience. During Oldham's 56 years as pastor of Glendale Baptist, more than 250 young people have surrendered their lives to fulltime Christian service — with their pastor mentoring them all.

Today Oldham's protégés, who call themselves "Swordsmen," occupy pulpits across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and have served as state convention presidents, SBC Executive Committee members, trustees of SBC entities and leaders in many other capacities. For more than 50 years, the Swordsmen gathered each summer in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting.

"His legacy is not a megachurch," said Mike Routt, a Swordsman who pastors Circle Drive Baptist Church, Colorado Springs, Colo., and is the SBC Executive Committee vice chairman. "But more than 250 people have surrendered to ministry under his leadership. If all of those 250 people and their families were back at Glendale, he would have one of the largest churches in America. But his legacy is not there at Glendale Baptist Church. His legacy is at churches and preaching points across America and around the world."

Ministry to students

Oldham was called to Glendale on July 21, 1957. Initially he told the pastor search committee he wasn't interested. But they called a second time and said the church was in a business session and would not adjourn until he agreed to pray further about coming. That prayer led to a move from Lansing, Mich., where he was pastoring, to western Kentucky.

Five decades later, at age 83, Oldham hasn't felt God call him into retirement. In the past two years, four new Swordsmen have surrendered to vocational ministry.

"I met with some [young people] last night until 11

o'clock," Oldham said in an interview earlier in 2013.

From day one at Glendale, he felt called to spend much of his time with younger people in the church. Often he can be found in a local restaurant surrounded by an entire section of students, and on Sunday nights he produces a local radio program called "Teentime" on which his young disciples preach, sing and give their testimonies. In 51 years of Teentime, Oldham has never preached on the program himself.

"One time in a deacons meeting one of our deacons brought up that the pastor is spending too much time with young people," Oldham said. "And he thought the deacons ought to correct me. I had to say to them, 'Men, if you don't want your pastor to spend time with young people, you need to get a different pastor because God's called me to do that.'"

As he spends time with young men and women, Oldham said a key to guiding so many into ministry is exposing them to outstanding preachers.

"When these men come, I get our young people to spend time with them," Oldham said. "I purposely had these men come to expose our young people to greatness."

A unique facet of Oldham's ministry is his lifelong singleness. He had girlfriends early in life and was even engaged once. But shortly

after arriving at Glendale, he realized the ministry to which God had called him was too time-consuming to take on a wife and children.

"The Lord seemed to say, 'It's OK. I'll take care of you,'" he said of his singleness. "And He has."

During his ministry Oldham has baptized more than 6,000 people. Many of them went on to be Swordsmen.

Naturally 56 years of ministry have brought difficult moments. One of the most dramatic occurred in the early 1990s when during a sermon Oldham realized that the choir behind him was leaving. Soon the congregation began leaving too and he heard a voice from the balcony: "Don't move. It's just going to take one shot."

A gunman was perched in the balcony with his weapon aimed at Oldham. Because of sunlight shining through a stained glass window, Oldham couldn't see the man. But he responded, "Whoever you are, you're not going to take a shot. This is God's house. Let's pray." Oldham began to pray and a deacon talked the man into surrendering his gun before the police arrived.

Yet the difficult times pale in comparison to God's blessings over the decades, Oldham said, and one of the greatest blessings is seeing God use his Swordsmen. (BP)



OLDHAM

**PERSECUTED
CHURCH**

Compiled from Wire Services



Worship services banned by guerrilla army in Colombia

PUTUMAYO, Colombia — Christians in southern Colombia are living in constant danger from a guerrilla army that has banned worship services in rural areas under its control.

An estimated 150 churches have been forced to close since July 2013, when the 32nd Front of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP in Spanish) launched a repressive campaign against Roman Catholic and evangelical churches in the department (state) of Putumayo.

The FARC-EP has prohibited celebration of the Mass and Protestant worship in most small towns and villages. Only congregations that have express permission from the rebel group are allowed to hold services without fear of retaliation.

Christians at greatest risk are the members of house churches and the itinerant evangelists who serve them.

"Every time my husband or another church leader leaves to go preach in the countryside, I can only ask, 'Lord, continue to watch out for the safety of every one of them,'" Jeanet Ortiz Pinto, wife of itinerant evangelist and radio speaker Angel Pinto, said in an interview. "My heart is saddened to see what is happening around us."

The Pintos have led the Church of God in Puerto Asis, Putumayo, since 1988. Angel Pinto also serves as itinerant pastor of several newly planted churches in the region.

The FARC-EP is known to have assassinated hundreds of evangelical church leaders over the years, including some of Pinto's ministerial colleagues in Puerto Asis.

Guerrilla threats have driven six priests from their parishes in the Diocese of Mocoa, according to press reports.

"In the manual of coexistence issued by area FARC units, they have ordered us to close our churches, prohibited us from visiting outlying communities, or to preach — in effect, we must cease religious celebrations altogether," said Monsignor Luis Alberto Parra, bishop of Mocoa.

Christians attacked after schools merge in Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria — Educational reforms in Nigeria's Osun state have created religious tensions in schools, resulting in Islamist youth beating a Christian principal unconscious in November 2013, Christian leaders said.

The state in southwestern Nigeria reclassified schools in September, thus merging those originally founded by Christian missionaries with other schools. The mergers, including the blending of single-sex schools with co-ed schools, require Muslims to attend the institutions of Christian heritage, the Christian leaders said. The Christian "missionary" schools, taken over by the state in 1975, have been considered public schools since then.

Among tensions created under the September changes, Islamist youth armed with axes and cutlasses Nov. 25 attacked staff members and students at the Baptist High School-Ejigbo after administrators enforced a ban on the hijab, a covering for head or body used by Muslim women. The Nigerian Baptist Convention had rejected the Osun government decision to send Muslim students to schools of Christian heritage, saying they would not allow hijab-wearing students to attend. Convention leaders said the new education policy of state Gov. Rauf Aregbesola, a Muslim, was an attempt to Islamize schools and force Islam on Christians.

Church members' homes raided in Turkmenistan

DASHOGUZ, Turkmenistan — Police and MSS secret police in Dashoguz, Turkmenistan, have raided members of the Pentecostal church Light of the East.

Two homes of church members were raided and religious literature including personal Bibles were seized. One church member was threatened with a 15-day jail term and deportation, even though he is a Turkmen citizen.

During one raid, on a rehearsal of songs for the following Sunday's meeting for worship, officials stated that "singing about God here is banned."

The church also was threatened that it might lose its state registration, thus making it illegal. It is one of the few registered churches outside the nation's capital.

A state religious affairs official who also is an imam told the church's Pastor Yuri Rozmetov that the Christian faith "is wrong" and pressured him to become a Muslim.

"His legacy is not a megachurch. ... His legacy is at churches and preaching points across America and around the world."

Mike Routt
pastor, Circle Drive Baptist Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.