

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Feb. 27, 2014
Vol. 179, No. 9

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

INSIDE



Ukraine's parliament changes government, grants amnesty to protesters

◆ Page 3



War in Africa continues; Christian leaders, believers fervently ask for prayer

◆ Pages 4-5

Birmingham chosen as 2019 annual meeting site for Southern Baptist Convention

◆ Page 7



Lawsuit targets same-sex 'marriage' ban in Alabama

Defining marriage

commons.wikimedia.org

Voter-approved marriage amendments are currently under fire in several states, including Alabama.

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in Montgomery sued the state in mid-February on behalf of Paul Hard, a Montgomery resident and a graduate of the University of Mobile and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He also is reportedly a former Baptist preacher, but attempts by *The Alabama Baptist* to receive further information from Hard about his pastoral history were unsuccessful at press time.

The suit is in response to the way Hard was treated following the death of his "husband," David Fancher, who died following a car accident in 2011. Hard wants to claim the estate of Fancher and seek the proceeds in a wrongful death case as well as have "married" listed on Fancher's death certificate, according to media reports.

According to the *Anniston Star*, Hard was initially denied by hospital officials any information and the chance to see Fancher after the accident on Interstate 65 in Autauga County on Aug. 1, 2011. Hard and Fancher were "married" in Cape Cod, Mass., for less than three months before the accident.

"Southerners are generally good-hearted people and will recognize

when a person is being unfairly treated in life's worst moments," Hard said. "Most married couples take for granted that if tragedy strikes they can proceed through the worst of times without the state saying at every turn that their marriage doesn't even exist. Marriages are significant, and my marriage is due the same respect as any other."

Marriage Protection Act

With this case, the SPLC seeks to overturn the state's Marriage Protection Act, a 1998 law that bans the recognition of same-sex "marriages" from other states, and the Sanctity of Marriage Amendment, which put this ban in the constitution in 2005.

Jennifer Ardis, Gov. Robert Bentley's communications director, said the governor believes in the "traditional definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman" and will work to protect the sanctity

of marriage in the state. Bentley has been named as a defendant in the suit, according to the *Anniston Star*.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange also has been named as a defendant in the case. "The people of Alabama have overwhelmingly decided that marriage is between a man and a woman," Strange said. "My job is to defend that decision, and I will vigorously do so."

Alabama Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard said the state's residents believe "marriage in our state exists only between a man and a woman."

"This lawsuit is part of a coordinated liberal agenda that is designed to erode the conservative Alabama values that the citizens of our state hold close to their hearts."

Voter-approved marriage amend-

ments also are under fire in Virginia, where a federal judge struck down that state's protection of traditional marriage by saying it violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Fifty-seven percent of Virginia voters approved the amendment in 2006, defining marriage as between one man and one woman, but U.S. District Judge Arenda Allen, an Obama appointee, ruled Feb. 13 that "the right to marry is a rigorously protected fundamental right" for all Americans.

"The right to marry is inseparable from our rights to privacy and intimate association," Allen wrote.

The judge also concluded, "Our nation's uneven but dogged journey (See 'Meaning,' page 9)



HARD

Al.com

State Senate bill defends use of marijuana oil

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

With medical marijuana making headlines in Alabama, a bill was approved Feb. 5 in Alabama's Senate Judiciary Committee that would provide a defense for the use of cannabidiol (CBD) oil — a marijuana derivative — for debilitating medical conditions.

The bill, Senate Bill (SB) 174 sponsored by Sen. Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville, is a companion bill to House Bill (HB) 104, which was pending committee action at press time.

If passed by the Legislature, the bill would be called Carly's Law,

named after a 2-year-old Birmingham girl who has uncontrollable seizures caused by a genetic disorder.

Rep. Mike Ball, R-Madison, is a retired agent of the Alabama Bureau of Investigation and is sponsor of HB 104 along with co-sponsors Rep. Patricia Todd, D-Birmingham, and Rep. Allen Farley, R-McCalla.

Ball said the bill's purpose is to protect patients and families from prosecution for possessing a substance "that has potential to provide great relief with little, if any, proven harmful side effects and almost no apparent potential for abuse or recreational use."

According to Ball, HB 104 started as the result of an email from the mother of a child suffering from seizures who had heard about a strain of marijuana with very low tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) levels and very high cannabidiol levels. Ball said as he began to research CBD oils, he "began to realize the potential this has to help suffering people, particularly children."

"The potential medicinal value of this particular strain of marijuana far outweighs any potential for abuse," he added. "I do not believe it is an appropriate use of our limited law (See 'Slippery,' page 9)

COMMENT

The Restraining Power of the Law

One of the hottest topics on today's political landscape is the legalization of marijuana. Already 20 states have approved marijuana use for medical purposes and two states have approved recreational use of the illegal drug.

President Obama recently said smoking marijuana was no worse than using alcohol. The Cato Institute declares that prohibition efforts — whether for marijuana, tobacco, alcohol or hard drugs like heroin and cocaine — are bound to fail. NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, must certainly welcome these allies to their cause of removing restrictions on the drug's use.

The Alabama Legislature appears poised to add our state to the list of those approving marijuana use for medical purposes. Privately some legislators say this will be the first step toward approving recreational use of the drug. Simply talk about marijuana being a new source of tax revenue and most anything will pass the Legislature, they joke.

Dictum of popular truth

As if to prove the futility of trying to limit undesirable conduct by law, these supporters of marijuana use point to the era of American history called Prohibition as proof that personal conduct cannot be controlled by the force of law. During that 13-year period (1920–1933), the manufacturing, distribution and sale of alcoholic beverages were largely illegal. General wisdom holds Prohibition a failure and many now say it is just as foolish to rely on the law to solve the nation's drug problems.

The trouble with this accepted dictum of popular truth is that it is wrong. If anything, Prohibition proved that individual behavior can be changed by the force of law.

Consumption of alcohol dropped noticeably during Prohibition. According to the U.S. Alcohol Epidemiological Data Reference Manual, Americans of drinkable age consumed an average of 29.53 gallons of beer each in 1915. By 1934 when Prohibition ended, the average was down to 13.58 gallons per person. Some may wonder why the average was that high given the illegal status of beer. However, Prohibition did not impact beer, wine or spirits made at home for personal use. It focused on the manufacturing, distribution and sale of alcohol.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

According to Mark H. Moore, professor of criminal justice at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, there were other results. Cirrhosis death rates for men were 29.5 per 100,000 in 1911 and 10.7 in 1929. Admissions to state mental hospitals for alcoholic psychosis declined from 10.1 per 100,000 in 1919 to 4.7 in 1928.

Arrests for public drunkenness and disorderly conduct declined 50 percent between 1916 and 1922 as the saloons — one for about every 200 Americans — and their associated vices closed down.

That alcohol consumption trended back upward after Prohibition indicates the power of the law to influence individual choices. While illegal, drinking dropped. Also one should not overlook the long-term impact of Prohibition. It took 45 years after Prohibition's repeal before Americans got back to consuming a similar amount of beer that was consumed in 1915.

Basing his conclusion on the past, Moore declared, "The common claim that laws backed by morally motivated political movements cannot reduce drug use is wrong."

State and federal laws can and should make a difference in the use and availability of marijuana.

Marijuana is addictive

There is little disagreement about the physical and psychological results of marijuana use. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is clear. Marijuana is addictive with about 9 percent of users becoming addicted to the drug. The numbers go up dramatically when users begin taking the drug in their teens — about 17 percent (1 in 6) become addicted. Among those who use the drug daily, the addiction rate is more than 25 percent; some studies indicate 50 percent.

The active ingredient in marijuana (THC) acts on certain receptors of nerve cells in the brain. These receptors are found in part of the brain that

influence pleasure, memory, thought, concentration, sensory and time perception, and coordinated movements. The results of using the drug can be altered perceptions of reality, impaired coordination, difficulty with thinking and problem solving, and disrupted learning and memory.

Because it seriously impairs judgment and motor coordination, marijuana contributes to risk of injury or death while driving a car. NIDA cites a recent study that found "marijuana use more than doubles a driver's risk of being in an accident."

Heavy use of marijuana by young people can impact brain development with effects being long-lasting or permanent. A New Zealand study cited a loss of eight IQ points for heavy teen users, and the lost cognitive abilities were not fully restored in those who quit smoking marijuana as adults.

"Obviously the research information is clear and has been for decades. Marijuana use is dangerous to individuals and those using marijuana are dangerous to others."

Because the drug increases heart rate, blood pressure and rate of breathing, NIDA reported adults have "a 4.8-fold increase in the risk of heart attack in the first hour after smoking the drug."

Problems mount as THC concentration increases and as more young people lose their inhibitions toward the drug. In the 1980s, the THC concentration of marijuana was about 4 percent. In 2012, the average was close to 15 percent, NIDA reported. While adult use of the drug has remained constant at about 4 percent, a recent government report

placed teen use at 30 percent.

Obviously the research information is clear and has been for decades. Marijuana use is dangerous to individuals and those using marijuana are dangerous to others.

We are not trying to be heartless to people with extraordinary medical circumstances. Rather we are trying to be realistic. A recent article by CNN pointed out that only 2 percent of those prescribed medical marijuana in Colorado suffer from cancer and only 1 percent from HIV/AIDS. Ninety-four percent cite "unspecified pain" as the justification for their marijuana prescriptions.

The same article pointed out the average user of medical marijuana in California "is a 32-year-old white man with no life-threatening illness but a long record of substance abuse."

According to Romans 13, one of the purposes of civil law is to restrain evil. Now is no time to change that approach concerning Alabama's laws about marijuana use. Laws prohibiting its use have made a difference in the past and they can make a difference in the future.

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 — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

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

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Chairman George A. Foust, Mike Shaw, Rosalie Hunt, Eddie Davidson, Jane Bellew, Travis Coleman, Helen W. Mayo, Ken Megginson, William Melton, Jim Oakley, Larry Patterson, Amelia Pearson, Lawrence Phipps, Wayne Randall, Bradley Rushing, Judy Stiefel, John Killian (ex-officio), Rick Lance (ex-officio).

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 Religious Communicators Council

'God is moving'



BP photo

Many churches in Kiev have set up tents in Independence Square to pray for individuals, serve hot tea, hand out tracts and witness for Christ. IMB workers say God is at work in the hearts of Ukrainians in the midst of escalating violence.

Ukraine's parliament changes government, grants amnesty to protesters

After the worst violence in Ukraine since Soviet control, the parliament forced changes in the government, freed prisoners and passed amnesty for all protesters.

On Feb. 20, security forces fired on numerous anti-government demonstrators in the capital city of Kiev, killing at least 70 people.

But just hours later on Feb. 21, Ukrainian President Viktor F. Yanukovich signed an agreement with main opposition leaders that reduced some of his presidential authority and committed to early elections.

Parliament took steps toward reverting to a former version of Ukraine's Constitution, which also significantly weakens the power of the president.

An unconditional blanket amnesty to all participants in the anti-government protests also was passed, absolving those in custody or under investigation and prohibiting future prosecutions of any protester. The minister of the interior also was dismissed.

Parliament then voted to allow the release of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who has been imprisoned for more than two years and was known as one of the president's most potent adversaries.

It is unclear what sparked the mid-February sudden rise in violence, with each side blaming the other. Protests began Nov. 21, 2013, when Yanukovich backed away from a trade deal with the European Union (EU) in favor of accepting financial aid from Russia. The conflict has now been named "EuroMaidan," Ukrainian for "Eurosquare."

Previously on Feb. 18, at least 25 people were killed and hundreds injured as the Interior Ministry demanded that protesters leave Kiev's Independence Square by 8 p.m. When the deadline passed, riot police dismantled barricades with the help of armored vehicles, water cannons and stun grenades. Some protesters responded by throwing Molotov cocktails and paving stones dug up from the streets.

EU-related talks over the Jan. 31 to Feb. 2

weekend in Germany gave EuroMaidan protesters resolve to push ahead with demands for Yanukovich to resign. The military's recent support of the government has further hardened their resolve.

Eastern Ukraine is strongly Russian in its identity, but the western part tends toward European influence. International Mission Board (IMB) representative Larry Forbes suggested many think Russia will use the connection with the east to justify lending their help to bring order to the country. With a population of 45 million, Ukraine is experiencing tension between an older generation with loyalty to Russia and a younger generation with ties to Western influence, particularly the EU.

Through the violence, many churches have been using a tent-based outreach in Independence Square to pray for individuals, serve hot tea, hand out tracts and share their faith during the three-month upheaval in Kiev.

"Thousands of Scripture portions have been distributed and the prayer tent on Independence Square is very active," said IMB representative Tim Johnson, who was close to the violence Feb. 18.

Johnson said all IMB personnel in Ukraine are safe and in contact with local believers to support their efforts to share Christ in the midst of the violence.

Local believers

Brady Sample, an IMB representative who lives in Kiev, said God is at work even amid the violence.

"This past month we have seen an amazing outpouring of God's Spirit," said Sample, who works closely with the Ukrainian Baptist Union, the largest evangelical association of churches in the country, which is calling for members to pray for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

"God is moving. This event is causing people to pray, and while they are praying for peace in the land, God is trying to bring

peace into people's hearts," Sample said.

V'acheslav Nesteruk, president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union, asked Christians to continue to pray.

"I encourage each believer to pray to the Lord, that He would stop the violence and bloodshed in our country," Nesteruk said. "Let us savor Christ in every place. Let us do good. Help those in need. Urge those around us to be at peace. We preach love and forgiveness. Remember that everyone will give account not only to the law of the state, but to God."

Alabama Baptists keep in touch

Alabama Baptists remain connected to churches and missionaries in Ukraine through Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections. The missions partnership, officially 2005-2012, saw 46 teams with 357 volunteers participate in missions projects in Ukraine. The partnership was twofold between the Ukrainian Baptist Union and IMB representatives in the country, according to the office of global missions of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

IMB representatives in Ukraine described a package of legislation suppressing political dissent that was rammed through Parliament in mid-January by Yanukovich supporters was what contributed to the tension. As it is, the legislation categorizes protesting against the government as "slander," punishable with a 15-year prison term, and it calls organizations that receive funding from outside Ukraine "foreign agents," penalizing them with a tax, according to Mission Network News.

Michael Cherenkoff, of Kiev-based Russian Ministries, likened the new laws to Stalin's Soviet Union of 1937. Many of the Christian ministries operating in Ukraine previously operated in Russia but left because of religious freedom concerns, Mission Network News reported.

Slander is not clearly defined under the new legislation, and Cherenkoff said this is "a very Soviet approach to the church to society." Usually citizens would be given time to express their opinions about potential new laws, but in this case the president signed the legislation with no chance for discussion.

At press time, attempts to reach IMB representatives in Ukraine after the Feb. 21 agreement was signed were unsuccessful.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (BP, TAB)

"This event is causing people to pray, and while they are praying for peace in the land, God is trying to bring peace into people's hearts."

Brady Sample
IMB representative



hdptcar file photo; used with permission
For months Muslim rebels and Christian militia in Central African Republic have been entrenched in back-and-forth revenge attacks.



hdptcar file photo; used with permission
The children of Central African Republic suffer greatly as Christian militia and Muslim rebels war with each other. A quarter of the country's population needs food aid urgently, and violent attacks plague the western part of the nation.

'Africa-changing' question

Tit-for-tat violence in Central African Republic raises bigger question for Africa

An escalating cycle of tit-for-tat violence between Christians and Muslims in Central African Republic (CAR) is raising questions for missionaries about the future of the Church in the region.

Retaliatory attacks between the two religious groups are wracking the western part of the nation with out-of-control bloodshed. According to BBC News, CAR is "a nation consumed by rage."

"There's a lot of stress, a lot of tension," said Ron Pontier, who has served for 30 years as a missions pilot for a Christian organization in CAR and neighboring countries.

There also are massacres, summary killings and torture, and a quarter of the country needs food aid urgently.

Séléka, an alliance of Muslim rebel groups, overthrew the government in March 2013 and attacked Christian businesses with widespread looting — part of a thrust to take over the country, which was formerly only 10 to 15 percent Muslim, Pontier said.

International peacekeepers came in to disarm the rebel alliance, finally overturning Séléka's power in January, but that made way for a new problem, according to Pontier. A militia called "anti-balaka," or anti-machete, that identifies itself as Christian began taking revenge on Séléka rebels and the Muslim population in general.

"The peacekeeping forces are having a huge problem, because if they disarm Muslims, the anti-balaka come in and kill the Muslims," Pontier said. "It's almost

impossible to know how to bring the thing to an end."

But Pontier keeps going there to encourage believers and pray with them for the fighting to stop.

"They really need to have peace — that's the big thing. The Christians and Muslims need to be able to forgive and live together peacefully," he said.

Waiting for an answer

Nik Ripken, an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts, agreed.

"The challenge for the Central African Republic is an answer to an old question for Africa that is still awaiting a positive, Africa-changing answer," said Ripken, who has served more than 25 years with the International Mission Board (IMB).

"Per usual, Christians and Muslims in the CAR are divided along tribal fault lines. Racism perhaps is the consistent tool that Satan uses most often to terrorize the innocent, molest the girl child and kill indiscriminately," he said.

When will Africa stop being defined by its deep divides? Ripken said that is a big question that Jesus took even deeper.

"Jesus stated the obvious that it is easy to love one's friends," he said. "But He raised the bar when He commanded that we love our enemies. Christians, if indeed we are followers of Jesus, know that violence begets violence and the cycle never ends. Jesus calls His children to go first, lay down their guns and actually believe that love wins over racism and hate." Because of the violent instabil-

ity, neither Pontier's organization nor the IMB has missionaries stationed in CAR — they're limited to visits like the one Pontier made in early February.

The mayhem has taken a toll on the Church too, Pontier said.

"It's hard to tell how many churches are left — lots of people have been displaced, and many churches have gathered together," he shared. "But because of the war, so many people are coming to Christ. Thousands and thousands are turning to the Lord in the midst of the persecution."

But even so, Pontier said he has a great fear — that lack of discipleship will mean the slow death of Christianity in CAR and its neighboring countries.

"Christians are not being disciplined and there is little personal spiritual growth, and it is sad for me to see that this is happening," he said. "Islam is really pushing to take over that whole area, and because it is considered 'reached,' a lot of missionary organizations don't put much effort into it."

Muslim Fulani herdsmen are slowly moving into CAR and bringing their influence with them, Pontier said. BBC and other news outlets reference "a long war to come in which Muslims will seize back half the country for themselves."

Pontier said it makes him tremble when he thinks of how that might stifle the rapid spread of the gospel taking place there right now.

"If we leave Central African Republic, if we leave Congo,

if we don't disciple, probably within five to 10 years those places will be unreached," he said. That is one reason he keeps going into those countries — to encourage Christians to aggressively disciple.

Tim Cearley, Alabama Baptist and IMB strategy leader for sub-Saharan Africa, echoes Pontier's focus. "My main prayer request for CAR and that whole western equatorial area is that God would raise up a team of experienced trainers — IMB and other internationals — to live in this area and serve as church-planting catalysts and researchers that help empower the many struggling churches to finish the task of reaching the lost," Cearley said.

Pray for believers

Peyton Queen, another IMB strategist, agreed, saying his prayer is that the Lord would strengthen the believers to be a bold witness in spite of the suffering and disruption that is happening to them personally and to their countrymen.

"I pray that God would use these national believers to remain strong in their faith, and in spite of the difficulties that godly actions would accompany a strong verbal gospel witness," Queen said. "We pray too that God would bring real peace to the nation and that neighboring countries would contribute to that peace as well."

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

The **Bridge** outreach event

March 9–12 • 6:30 p.m. • Von Braun Center, Huntsville

Dr. Steve Hale preaching • Bob Smith leading the music

SPECIAL GUESTS INCLUDE: University of Alabama football team chaplain **Jeremiah Castille**, former Auburn University quarterback **Patrick Nix**, Lieutenant General **James Pillsbury**, Atlanta hostage survivor **Ashley Smith Robinson** and Christian recording artist **Britt Nicole**.

FREE ADMISSION & FREE PARKING in city lots near Von Braun Center

Bring a non-perishable canned food item(s) with you to help the needy in the Huntsville area.

Sponsored by Madison Baptist Association & Huntsville area churches

For more information, visit www.thebridgeevent.com.

CONFLICT IN AFRICA

International Mission Board representative Curt Iles (left) prays with Pastor John Monychol and his family in South Sudan. Monychol became a Christian after Jesus appeared to him in a dream, and he later planted 11 churches. He and his family are now living in a refugee camp because of the violence in the country.

'We have not given up'



BP photo

Death toll 'very substantially in excess' as South Sudan's Civil War continues

Despite a ceasefire that began in late January, thousands of people, including Christians, in South Sudan are withstanding attacks from all sides — even neighboring tribes.

The country's Civil War essentially started as a political rivalry over who should

rule the country between President Salva Kiir (of the Dinka tribe) and his former deputy Riek Machar (of the Nuer tribe, who Kiir fired in July 2013). Because each leader's constituents are mostly his tribesmen, the political battle has become a tribal battle. Tension between the Dinka and the Nuer is not a recent development. But on Dec. 15, 2013, members of the presidential guard, who are Dinka, tried to

disarm members of the guard who are Nuer, reportedly because they feared the Nuer would try to stage a coup.

Now the country's army itself has split, with both sides equipped with tanks, artillery and heavy weapons they are using against each other. The United Nations (U.N.) said fighting had spread to five of the country's 10 states and that it had credible reports that civilians were being attacked and killed based on their ethnicity.

At press time, there was no current death toll available, but U.N. peacekeeping chief Herve Ladsous estimated it was "very substantially in excess" of the 1,000 deaths the U.N. reported just after conflict erupted in December 2013. Estimates by the International Crisis Group were closer to 10,000.

John Monychol, a local Christian who planted 11 churches in the Upper Nile region, was forced to leave his home and live in a refugee camp with his family.

Monychol used to fight in the Sudan People's Liberation Army until he had a dream about Jesus. Later an International Mission Board missionary shared the gospel with him and was able to disciple him in his new faith.

Monychol now ministers to more than 600 church members in the Upper Nile area.

"My desire is to minister to them and also do some counseling," he said. "We need to pray together ... to see how we can promote peace and reach out to our area."

South Sudan has only been an independent country from Sudan since July 2011, making it the world's

youngest country. But conflict over control of oil-rich regions may cause it to crumble before its third birthday.

The current violence has caused nationals to flee the country and refugee camps to again come to war-torn areas of the country. An estimated 750,000 have fled their homes in South Sudan. The U.N. reports that up to 3.7 million people now face extreme hunger or starvation because of the lack of food and hygiene in refugee camps.

Raymond Lyrene, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, serves on the board of directors for Living Water Community Transformation, Inc. (LWCT), a multi-faceted Christian ministry based in Akot, South Sudan.

The Birmingham Baptist Association

church recently entered into a five-year partnership with LWCT to support and sustain its ministries. And the church serves in Akot on two to three missions trips a year.

The need to return home

Lyrene, who has himself been to Akot eight times and heads the ministry's student health and agricultural arms, said if refugees are not able to return to their homes and land soon they will miss planting season. Many nationals are primarily subsistence farmers so it is vital that they plant and harvest their food each season, he explained.

And LWCT's schools, women's ministry and pastoral training have all been temporarily shut down due to violent outbreaks just miles away from Akot.

"All leaders and ministers have been asked to stay home to stay safe," Lyrene said of LWCT staff. "None of the ministries are safe enough to continue (at this time)."

But Lyrene and Dawson members are still involved with LWCT and are negotiating security guarantees with the village government to enable the ministries to re-open.

"We don't think (an improvement) will be immediate, but we're hoping that there will be some great breakthrough in the next six to eight weeks," Lyrene said. "We have not given up. We're going back (to Akot) as soon as we think it's safe to travel."

North River Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, also supports LWCT. (Compiled from wire services, TAB)

Baptists in Africa upset about ongoing conflict; call for peace

Baptists in Africa have expressed deep displeasure at ongoing conflicts on the continent that have led to "wanton destruction of life and property of defenseless and vulnerable citizens."

Making special reference to the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the All Africa Baptist Fellowship (AABF) called "upon all parties involved to put an end to their anti-social actions and to start a serious search for peace."

Safety, security

AABF, a regional body of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), urged the respective governments to "fulfill their constitutional responsibility to provide and guarantee peaceful co-existence, safety and security for all citizens irrespective of ethnicity, language, color, gender or religion."

Baptists in Africa and elsewhere were encouraged "to intercede for these countries that respect for human life, peace

and stability will soon be restored" and to "take practical action to express their Christian love and compassion to those affected."

Fighting in the CAR began in 2012 and led to the ousting of the government by Séléka, a Muslim rebel coalition. Attacks were made against Christian civilians.

Fighting continues in South Sudan (see story, this page) between the government and rebels.

The DRC has been bedeviled by wars and conflicts going back decades. An estimated 5.4 million people have died as a result of the conflicts.

There are four BWA member organizations in CAR with total membership of more than 180,000 in more than 770 churches. The DRC has 11 BWA member organizations with more than 1.6 million members in approximately 5,400 churches. South Sudan reports less than 1,000 members, though they were part of the larger Sudan Interior Church, based in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, before the country's independence. (BWA)

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.

COFFEE

► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will host a youth conference March 2–5, 6:30–8 p.m. The theme is “For me to live.” There will be music and fellowship and guest speakers each evening. Please consider bringing your youth group and encourage other youth to attend. Youth do not have to be a member of a church or organized youth group to attend. Danny Wiggins is pastor. ► **Victoria Church, Elba**, will host a community-wide revival sponsored by Wise Mill Assembly of God, Elba; Hebron Church, Troy; Mount Zion Church, Jack; Victoria Church, Whitewater Church, Woodland Grove Church and Zion Chapel Church, all of Elba. The revival will be March 9–14 and March 16. The service time will be Sundays at 6 p.m. and weeknights at 7. A combined choir from the participating churches will provide the music nightly. Speakers will be: Kenneth Hagler, Larry Grimm, Donnie Marler, Doug Knight, Mark Cooper, Richard Collier and Cary Maulden. All are welcome to attend. Donnie Marler is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Bay Springs Church, Dothan**, and **Pilgrim Home Church, Newton**, will hold a joint revival March 2–5 at Bay Springs Church. Services will be March 2, 6 p.m. and March 3–5, 7 p.m. Mack Mor-

ris, pastor of Woodridge Church, Mobile, will speak March 2–4 and Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, will speak March 5. Scott E. Cox is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will host its annual Spring Training for all area Sunday School teachers and church ministry leaders March 7–8. Spring Training begins with an Evangelistic Friday Night Service at 6:30 p.m. featuring keynote speaker Johnny Hunt. The event concludes March 8 with breakout sessions from 8–11:30 a.m. and a closing celebration with Allan Taylor. For registration and information visit www.springtraining-n-action.org. Early Bird Registration ends March 3. For information call the church at 256-729-1328. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MARSHALL

► The **Marshall Baptist Association** evangelism rally will be held at **Union Grove #1 Church, Albertville**, on March 3, 6:30 p.m. Garry Ragsdale, of Mount Zion Church, Alexandria, will be the evangelist. A fellowship meal will be provided by the association at 5:30 p.m. The church also will hold “March Madness 2014.” Evangelists include: Garry Ragsdale, of Mount Zion Church, Alexandria,

on March 3; Phillip Elliott, of Bellevue Church, Gadsden, on March 10; Dusty McLemore, of Lindsay Lane Church, Athens, on March 17; Jeff Steele, of Faith Church, Vinemont, on March 23; and Alan Hallmark, of Whitesboro Church, Sardis City, on March 31. Services on Mondays will begin at 6:30 p.m. The March 23 service will begin at 6 p.m. The church also will hold Upward Soccer registration through March 22. Leagues for K4–K5, grades 1–3 and grades 4–6 will be available. For information call the church office at 256-891-0500. Jonathan Powell is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Shoal Creek Church, Decatur**, collected \$8,629 for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. They had a goal of \$7,500. Gary Linville is pastor.

SALEM-TROY

► **Salem Church, Brundidge**, will hold revival March 9–12. Sunday services will be 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Monday–Wednesday services will be at 7 p.m. The church is participating in Revive This Nation, which is a ministry of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, that sends students and faculty across the nation to preach revival. Jason Wilder, pastor of Frost Church in Texas, will speak. Joshua Adams, of Slocomb, will lead music. Chad Manion is pastor.

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Jury awards \$2.3 million in pastor's wrongful death

GAINESVILLE, Ga. — A federal jury has awarded more than \$2.3 million to the widow of a Georgia Baptist pastor shot and killed in a botched drug investigation in 2009.

Jurors in U.S. District Court in Gainesville, Ga., determined that Deputy Billy Shane Harrison “intentionally committed acts that violated Jonathan Ayers’ constitutional right not to be subjected to excessive or unreasonable force by a law enforcement officer” when Ayers, the pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Lavonia, Ga., unknowingly wandered into an undercover drug sting Sept. 1, 2009, in Toccoa, Ga.

Ayers, 28, became a person of interest when undercover officers in a multi-county drug task force saw him give a ride to a woman they believed to be waiting to buy drugs from her dealer. Church members later said Ayers had been trying to minister to the woman, urging her to get off drugs and turn her life around.

Abigail Ayers, acting both as Ayers’ surviving spouse and administratrix of his estate, filed a civil lawsuit March 15, 2010, claiming that “without legal cause or excuse,” Harrison and fellow officers “were in the process of unreasonably seizing the decedent and while unreasonably violating his rights under the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution.” The lawsuit accused the officers of violating proper police procedure by not calling for assistance of a clearly marked police vehicle or backup by a uniformed officer.

Union University names Texas educator as new president

JACKSON, Tenn. — Samuel W. “Dub” Oliver, president of East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas, since 2009, has been named president of Union University, a Baptist school in Jackson, Tenn., effective June 1.

Oliver was the former pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Crawford, Texas, and taught in the Fort Worth Independent School District. Oliver holds an undergraduate degree from Baylor University and a master’s degree in educational psychology and doctorate in educational administration from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Union University’s board of trustees unanimously elected Oliver, 48, as the school’s 16th president Feb. 10.

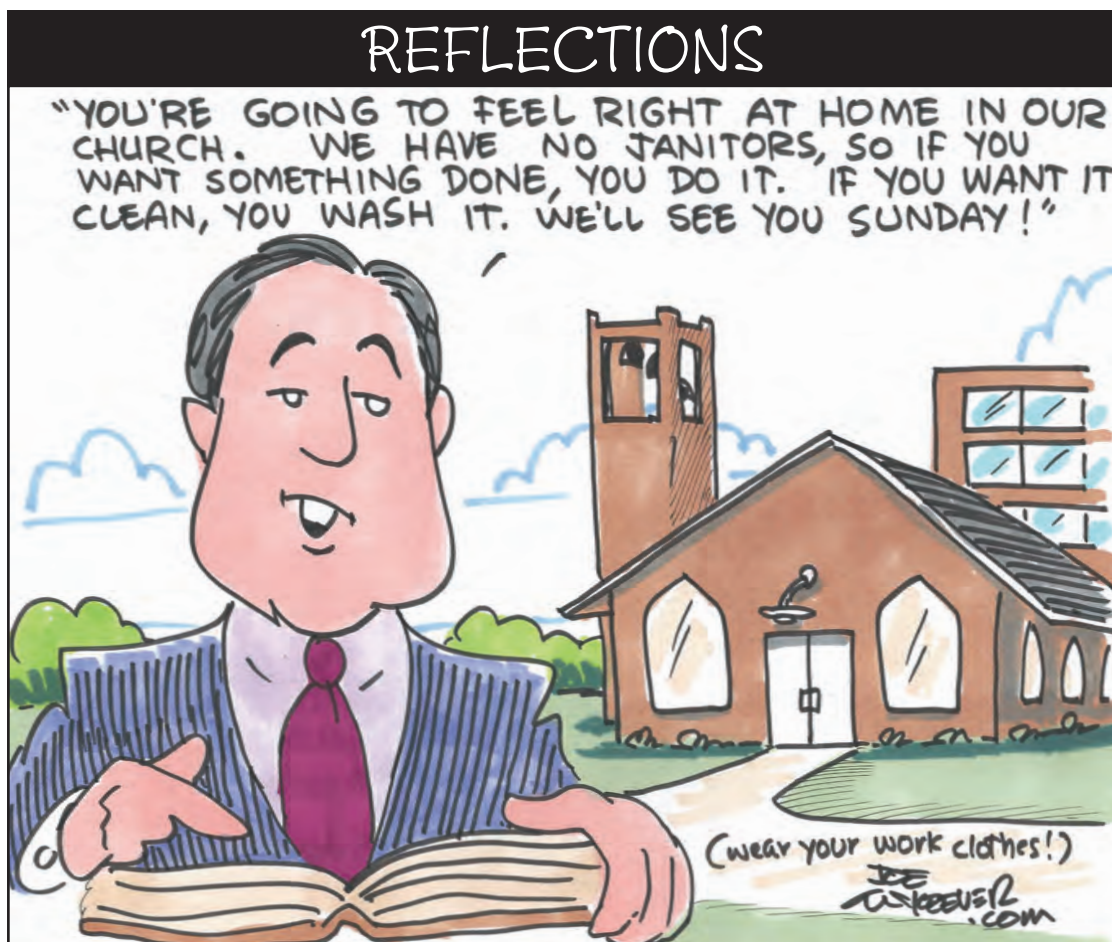
Current president David S. Dockery has served since Dec. 8, 1995, and will transition to the role of chancellor in July.

North Carolina Baptist camp chaperone indicted

WILMINGTON, N.C. — A volunteer youth worker accused of playing strip poker for sexual gratification with boys at a North Carolina Baptist camp in 2013 has been indicted on felony charges.

Clyde Wesley Way, 68, was indicted Jan. 21 by a grand jury on four counts of taking indecent liberties with a child and four counts of indecent exposure, according to the *Port City Daily*. The acts are alleged to have occurred during a church retreat at the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell, June 24–29, 2013.

Prior to his arrest July 10, 2013, Way worked several years as volunteer student ministries team leader for the Stanly Baptist Association. Way is scheduled to make his next appearance in Brunswick County Superior Court on April 8.

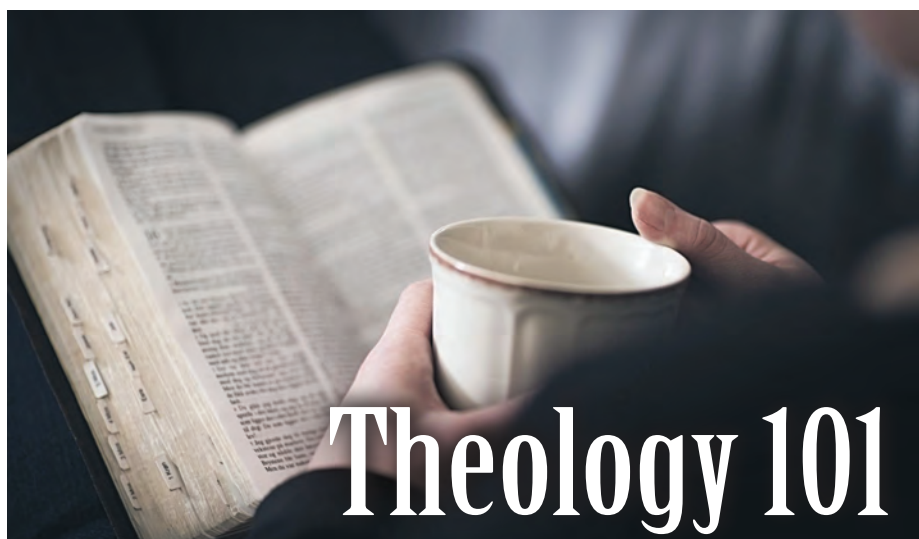


Alabama Baptist GIVING

Year to Date through Jan. 31, 2014

JANUARY	
CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,475,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$4,399,474
Over Goal for Month	\$924,474
YEAR TO DATE	
CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,475,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$4,399,474
Over Goal for Year	\$924,474

The monthly and year-to-date totals include CP base, CP state causes and SBC causes.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Christ

Jesus: Came to Teach Truth

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

As we have considered in previous weeks, the apostle John, whom God used to pen the fourth Gospel, opened his witness about Jesus by calling Him “the Word.” In so doing, the Gospel of John elaborates by telling us that the divine, eternal and living Word became flesh both to reveal God and redeem sinners. Thus by way of review, we affirm that Jesus came as the incarnate Word to make God known and came as the Lamb of God to redeem us by taking away our sin.

Heaven-sent Rabbi

Today we go further to affirm that Jesus came as the “Teacher come from God,” the heaven-sent Rabbi. John 1:17 tells us that “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Having come as the bearer or channel of truth in His own incarnate life, Jesus both demonstrated truth in His life and taught truth by His words.

Such was the impact of Jesus’ words that people who heard Him teach began referring to Him as the Teacher. Some even concluded, “No one ever spoke like this man” (John 7:46). Remember Nicodemus, whom Jesus described as “the teacher of Israel” (John 3:10)? “The teacher of Israel” called Jesus a “Teacher come from God” (John 3:2). Two close friends of Jesus were the sisters, Martha and Mary. When Martha announced Jesus’ arrival during their period of mourning their brother’s death, she phrased it, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you” (John 11:28). “Teacher” was a role Jesus accepted and endorsed, saying to the disciples, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am” (John 13:13).

Jesus’ reputation as a teacher was due not merely to His eloquence or His method, although both were present. His eloquence was not that of flowery, high-sounding phrases or of extensive vocabulary, but the eloquence of clarity. His method was to couch truth

in everyday images, illustrations and parables, thereby putting divine truth within the grasp of ordinary people.

However, what caused people to marvel over Jesus as the Teacher more than anything else was the fact that they heard the ring of truth in His words. His words had a different sound to human ears and hearts than did the teaching of the scribes. He spoke with clarity and authority. He put truth down at street level where common people understood His teaching. What made Jesus different from all others as a teacher of truth? He embodied the truth He taught.

In a way that no other person has duplicated so completely, Jesus was the embodiment of truth before He became its Teacher. Recall again His famous claim about being “the truth” (John 14:6). As truth incarnate, Jesus was the consummate Teacher of truth. He came to be truth in order to teach truth with authority and accuracy. Who Jesus was in the days of His flesh gave credibility and force to what He said.

Words of truth

Therein lies a valuable principle for all who would speak of the things of God: we speak best when we speak out of lives that exemplify the truths we seek to communicate. Words of truth backed up by a life that lives the truth are infused with life-giving energy and power. Jesus put it like this: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). Eloquent words without the power of a godly life become rather lifeless words. ❏

Jerry Batson,
retired associate
dean of Beeson
Divinity School at
Samford University
and professor at
several schools of
religion, is pastor
of First Baptist
Church, McCalla.



Hosting the Southern Baptist Convention

Birmingham chosen as 2019 annual meeting site

The 2019 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting will be held in Birmingham, according to a recent decision made by the SBC Executive Committee (EC).

The EC approved recommendations of Birmingham as the 2019 site during its Feb. 17–18 meeting in Nashville, since the central Alabama city met the guidelines set in place by the convention, for example: a minimum of 3,000 rooms within 2 miles of the convention center, a convention center with a minimum seating of 16,000 and geographical proximity to a numerically significant Southern Baptist population.

Birmingham, Nashville and Indianapolis all submitted proposals to be considered as the 2019 site. The three cities were previously visited and later considered at the February EC meeting.

The Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex was proposed as the headquarter accommodations for the annual meeting.

Other EC decisions

The EC also decided it will consider a proposal to update the SBC constitution regarding qualifications for churches to send messengers to the annual meeting.

The EC decided to place the item on its June 9 agenda prior to the SBC annual meeting in Baltimore, Md., June 10–11, to allow Southern Baptists time to discuss the proposed change and provide feedback. The committee’s deliberations, then, will determine whether the proposed revision will be presented to messengers at the SBC annual meeting.

The proposal to amend Article III came as a motion from the floor at the 2013 SBC annual meeting — the 16th motion on this article in the past 35 years — to re-evaluate the minimum qualifications for seating

additional church messengers at the SBC.

Article III currently states that churches in friendly cooperation with the convention can send one additional messenger for every 250 members or for each \$250 per year “paid to the work of the Convention,” an amount dating back to 1888.

Under the new proposal to be considered at the June EC meeting each cooperating church that contributed to convention causes during the preceding fiscal year would automatically qualify for two messengers.

Additional messengers would be recognized from a cooperating church by one of two options, whichever allows the greater number of messengers:

- ▶ One additional messenger for each full percent of the church’s undesignated receipts through any combination of gifts through the Cooperative Program (CP), designated gifts through the EC for convention causes or to any SBC entity.

- ▶ One additional messenger for each \$6,000 the church contributes in the preceding year through the same combination of the CP, designated gifts through the EC for convention causes or to any SBC entity. The \$6,000 figure was arrived at by adjusting for inflation and other factors since 1888. It is meant to be comparable to the \$250 figure adopted 126 years ago.

The EC also:

- ▶ approved the 2014–15 CP Allocation Budget of \$188,000,000 for recommendation to the SBC during its annual meeting in Baltimore. The proposed budget maintains current allocations to the convention’s ministries.

- ▶ affirmed the name Global Hunger Relief as the successor to the name World Hunger Fund for the SBC-approved fund.

The recommendations will be presented to messengers at the 2014 annual meeting. (BP, TAB)



Photo by Tim Colvert

DORA'S BETHEL COMPLETES NEW EDUCATION BUILDING

Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, in Sulphur Springs Baptist Association will hold a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of its new education building for preschool, children and youth March 2 at 10:30 a.m. An open house tour of the 12,000-square-foot facility will follow. The building features 17 classrooms, age-appropriate furnishings and technology and ample resource and storage areas for teachers. It also includes a nearly 1,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art lecture hall that can accommodate large Bible study groups. John S. Foles is pastor.



TRAIL RIDE AT LAKE MARTIN

Along the beautiful trails around Lake Martin at
Russell Lands in Alexander City



APRIL 12, 2014 • 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
The Stables at Russell Crossroads, Alexander City, Ala.



Bring along an unchurched friend and enjoy a fun-filled day on your horse, with beautiful scenery and great fellowship! There will be a morning trail ride, followed by an exceptional lunch, and then an afternoon ride on a different trail. The rides will be divided into three different trail groups of 20 horses each, allowing plenty of open space, fresh air and safety for all. Registration is limited to the first 60 horses. A Gospel presentation will be shared during the day, so prayerfully consider who you will invite!

COST: \$25, INCLUDING LUNCH

REGISTRATION REQUIRED • Toll-free:
1-800-264-1225 ext. 258 • **Direct:** 334-613-2258
Email: anelson@alsbom.org
(Coggins test required by state law.
Please – no stallions.)



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

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

Meaning of 'We the People'

Other states take marriage amendment actions

(continued from page 1)
toward truer and more meaningful freedoms for our citizens has brought us continually to a deeper understanding of the first three words in our Constitution: We the People. We the People have become a broader, more diverse family than once imagined. ... We have arrived upon another moment in history when We the People become more inclusive, and our freedom more perfect."

Mat Staver, chairman of Liberty Counsel, called the decision "outrageous and legally flawed."

"The Constitution cannot be changed by the stroke of a judge's pen, nor does it bow to a judge's personal ideology. The overwhelming majority of Virginia voters who make up 'we the people' voted to affirm natural marriage," Staver said.

On appeal, Liberty Counsel will file an amicus brief in the case.

In other states

Other actions against state marriage amendments include:

► A Kentucky Baptist minister and gay-rights activist filed a lawsuit Feb. 14 claiming the state's ban on same-sex "marriage" is unconstitutional.

Maurice "Bojangles" Blanchard — who with his partner, Dominique James, was fined 1 cent for trespassing in November 2013 for refusing to leave a county clerk's office after being told they could not apply for a marriage license — asked U.S. District Judge John Heyburn to build on his finding two days earlier that Kentucky must recognize same-sex

unions performed legally in other states.

Blanchard leads the True Colors Ministry, founded in 2011 at Highland Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., as an outreach ministry to members of the LGBTQ community.

He and James and another couple denied marriage licenses by the county clerk in Louisville claim denying them rights available to others violates the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which says that no citizen can be denied equal protection under the law.

► In Louisiana, four same-sex couples filed a federal lawsuit Feb. 12 challenging Louisiana's refusal to recognize gay "marriages" performed in other states. The couples claim Louisiana, by restricting marriage to unions of one man and one woman, is violating the U.S. Constitution's equal protection and due process guarantees, the *Shreveport Times* reported. Part of their case involves the IRS recognizing same-sex "marriages" but the state of Louisiana recognizing only traditional marriages.

► In Missouri, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit asking a state court trial judge to force the state to recognize same-sex "marriages" from other states. Though the lawsuit does not specifically ask the court to invalidate Missouri's marriage amendment, experts believe the case will lead to its nullification.

► In Indiana, legislation protecting traditional marriage has been delayed by lawmakers who have changed their positions. (TAB, BP, ABP)

Slippery slope



Bill 'simply decriminalizes the possession of CBD oil,' Taylor says

(continued from page 1)
enforcement resources to prosecute these people."

After HB 104 was introduced, Ball said he learned of several changes he believed would improve the bill.

"Out of an abundance of caution, we placed a limit of 3 percent allowable THC level on the CBD oil," well below the 20 percent level commonly found in marijuana used for recreational purposes, he explained.

Ball added that language in SB 174 was tightened to ensure the law would only apply to the oil that is free of plant material. "The Alabama Medical Association also recommended language regarding those who might have ailments that could benefit from the oil. These recommended changes were incorporated into SB 174," he said, noting that while HB 104 was the "starting point," SB 174 is the bill he hopes to pass.

Sen. Bryan Taylor, R-Prattville, voted against SB 174 in the Senate Judiciary Committee, noting several reasons for his opposition.

"The bill did not require a physician's prescription," he said, adding no testimony was offered to the committee from medical experts to confirm the scientific case for CBD oil. "While the sponsor of the bill offered a letter of support from the Alabama chapter of the American Academy of [Pediatrics], it was not a record of scientific evidence," he said.

As a legal matter, Taylor said the bill really doesn't even accomplish what its proponents believe it would accomplish. Marijuana and its derivatives are still illegal under federal law, he said, and even if this bill passed, the sale and transport of CBD oil in Alabama would still be illegal under federal and state law.

Providing someone a defense to one criminal law is meaningless to them if they can be prosecuted under another criminal law involving the same conduct, he said.

Taylor thinks any bill that leaves so many unanswered questions risks creating a slippery slope that could lead to legalizing marijuana.

"If medical science eventually shows that it really can help children suffering from epilepsy or similar conditions, without opening the door to the legal use of marijuana for its psychoactive effects, then I'm willing to say it's at least worth considering whether we can adequately regulate its use for that specific purpose. Nobody wants children to suffer unnecessarily," he said. "But this bill fails by any standard when it comes to having the support of well-documented medical science and adequate regulation for specific uses."

And for supporters who claim the bill isn't opening the door to legalizing marijuana, Taylor would tell them to propose a bill that "actually provides for the regulated, prescribed use of CBD for scientifically proven medical purposes."

He noted this current bill "simply decriminalizes the possession of CBD oil with a 'letter' from a doctor. That is not enough to convince skeptics that

it's anything other than a step toward legalization of marijuana," he said.

The idea of the bill becoming a slippery slope to legalizing marijuana was an initial concern for Ball when he first began considering the bill's political ramifications, he said. However, that changed when he began receiving opposition from the pro-marijuana legalization crowd, he said.

"It was puzzling until I began getting emails from them opposing Carly's Law," Ball noted. "I then realized that if the non-psychoactive CBD oil and its potential medicinal value is made available to those who could benefit without the psychoactive properties, it would have the potential to damage their political movement by taking away much of the medical argument from the marijuana legalization

movement. Their movement would continue; however, they would be left arguing for marijuana legalization primarily for recreational purposes. It would probably be a much steeper hill for them to climb in Alabama."

Ball said his faith is the reason he's carrying this bill. "Something deep in my heart compelled me to do this," he said. "I prayed for someone else to do it, but it kept coming back to me. At some point, I came to the conclusion that Carly's Law is more spiritual than political."

He added, "Hope for suffering children and families is the purpose of Carly's Law. We have

families in Alabama that have moved and those who are planning to move in order to administer this oil to their children without fear of prosecution."

But Taylor thinks ultimately most Alabama lawmakers are still reticent to support something like this. "At least until it is justified by sound medical science," he added.

"My faith, my belief that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, certainly factors into my personal decision not to use illegal drugs," Taylor noted. "My decision on this bill is driven by my interest in sound public policy. This bill failed to meet that standard."

Other related bills

Other medical marijuana-related bills include HB 207, a Carly's Law-related bill sponsored by Ball, Farley, Todd, Rep. Mike Hill, R-Columbiana, and Rep. Jim Patterson, R-Meridianville. At press time the bill had been read for the first time and referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

There also is HB 488, sponsored by Todd. According to the bill's synopsis, it "would establish a medical exemption for the possession and personal use of marijuana only for certain qualifying patients who have been diagnosed by a physician as having a serious medical condition and been issued a valid medical marijuana identification card." The bill also would provide that the possession of 1 ounce or less of marijuana is a civil penalty. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the House Judiciary Committee at press time.

So far, 20 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that allow the sale of medical marijuana.

To contact your senator, call 334-242-7800. To contact your representative, call 334-242-7600. ☞

"My decision on this bill is driven by my interest in sound public policy. This bill failed to meet that standard."

Sen. Bryan Taylor, R-Prattville

WHITESBURG BAPTIST
OUTDOOR EXPO



March 7, 2014 with Jason Cruise

At the Whitesburg Baptist Center
7300 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802

Fishing, Hunting & Outdoor Vendors • Live Music
Wild Game Tasting & Snacks

Tickets available in the ROC office at the Whitesburg Baptist Center. Adults \$12 (\$15 day of the event); Kids \$6 (\$8 day of the event).

Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago February 1964

Concern at the Evangelism Conference: Those attending the State Evangelism Conference in the city auditorium in Montgomery were all deeply concerned over the unfortunate accident suffered by George Bagley, executive secretary of the State Executive Board. He had taken his son's Training Union group to Birmingham for an ice skating outing and fallen, breaking his hip. In the absence of an executive secretary of evangelism, Claude Ammerman and George Ricker did a splendid job of directing and caring for the meeting. At the night services the 2,200 capacity auditorium was filled and the spirit was high.

40 Years Ago February 1974

Closing Session: An overflow crowd jam-packed the spacious auditorium of First Baptist Church, Huntsville, for the closing session of the 27th annual Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference to hear Manuel Scot preach. The pastor from Los Angeles was one of the most popular speakers on the program. Alvin Hopson, pastor of First, Huntsville; Hugh Chambliss, executive director of Madison Baptist Association; the Huntsville

Baptist pastors; and Otis Williams, state evangelism secretary who planned an outstanding program, made all the people feel welcome.

30 Years Ago February 1984

Evangelism Conference '84: The setting for this year's State Evangelism Conference was the beautiful Leslie Wright Hall on the campus of Samford University in Birmingham. The music and singing under the leadership of Claude Rhea, chairman of Samford's music department, was inspirational and set the tone for the services. Among the speakers were S.M. Lockridge, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, San Diego, Calif.; John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.; and Perry Sanders, pastor of First Baptist Church, La-Fayette, La.

20 Years Ago February 1994

Evangelism Conference Targets 'Hurting Humanity': The message of "Hope for Hurting Humanity" shared the spotlight with the familiar evangelistic emphases at the 47th annual State Evangelism Conference meeting at Birmingham's Shades Mountain Baptist Church Jan. 24 and 25. The combination

of the themes was intentional, said conference coordinator Harper Shannon, director of evangelism for the state convention and associate to the executive secretary. Among those speaking were: E.V. Hill, the well-known pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Los Angeles, Calif.; Jack MacGorman, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; Larry Thompson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile; and Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

10 Years Ago February 2004

State Evangelism Conference Promotes Idea of Intentionality: The Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference, held Jan. 26-27 at Valley View Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, featured speakers and preachers who interpreted the conference theme, "Intentional Evangelism." Three tracks — traditional, contemporary and discipleship — were offered during the day and evangelism rallies took place in the evenings. Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C., preached during the opening rally of the conference.

TheBusCenter.com

Just a few clicks and you'll find the right bus for your needs AND your budget!

- Huge Selection - New & Used
- Special Financing Offers
- Dedicated Warranty Personnel
- Full Inventory of Replacement Parts
- Exceptional Service Facilities

800-367-9463
TRANSPORTATION SOUTH-BIRMINGHAM
TheBusCenter.com

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: First Baptist Church of Mt. Olive, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Master of Divinity preferred; 5-10 years experience as pastor at a Southern Baptist church. Please submit resumés by mail to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church of Mt. Olive, 3200 Mt. Olive Road, Mt. Olive, AL 35117, or email resumés to: Sheila@fbcmo.org.

PASTOR: Liberty Baptist Church is searching for a pastor. If interested in being the pastor, please forward resumé to: Liberty Baptist Church, 808 County Road 9, Crossville, AL 35962. www.libertybaptistchurchpainter.com.

PASTOR: Enon Baptist Church of Morris, Ala., (located in North Jefferson County) is seeking a full-time pastor. Master of Divinity is preferred with 5-10 years experience as pastor in a Southern Baptist church. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, Enon Baptist Church, 724 Morris-Majestic Road, Morris, AL 35116, or email to: secretary@enonbaptist.net.

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

MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP: WPFBC (Cullman, Ala.) is seeking a minister of music/worship to lead our church in two unique Sunday morning worship services and one Sunday evening service. This minister of music/worship leader will work closely with the staff throughout the week and di-

rect a 20+ adult choir and full praise band while assisting in other musical activities in the church. Please send resumés by March 30 to: West Point First Baptist Church, ATTN: Music Search Committee, 140 County Road 1242, Cullman, AL 35057.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Liberty Baptist Church, Deatsville, is seeking a part-time music minister to lead our adult choir and congregation. Church is located approximately 12 miles outside of Prattville, Ala. Please contact Bro. Joyce Bentley at 334-365-9720 or email resumé to: pastorjoey@libertybaptistlife.org.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Meek Baptist Church in Arley, Ala., is seeking a godly man to lead our choir and congregation in blended style worship. Email resumé: meekbaptist@bellsouth.net. www.meekbc.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP: FBC Fairview (NE Cullman County) is seeking a bivocational minister of music/worship to lead in blended worship services. Send resumé to: fbcfpastor@att.net by March 12.

FAMILY PASTOR: FBC Valley, Ala., is seeking a full-time family pastor. This position will work to disciple our children, youth, as well as work with parents. Please send resumés to: tammym@fbcvalley.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

BOOKKEEPER: Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster is accepting resumés for a bookkeeper. This part-time position (25 hours) will consist of

monthly bookkeeping, accounts payable and some accounts receivable duties. Relevant work experience and computer skills are required. Please send resumé to: resumes@ewestwood.org.

BUSINESS

FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR-LIFTS: 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.

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.

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.

STEEPLES, ETC.: No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site con-

sultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for Terry Barnes, owner. Visit gallery at www.SteeplesEtc.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

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE VACATION CONDOS: Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct. Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Call 205-556-0368, 205-752-1231, 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

BIBLE LAND DEPARTURES: Cruise and tour in the steps of Paul and John catering to the Southern Baptist. 8-19 day first class packages. www.pilgrimgtours.com. 1-800-322-0788.

EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE LANDS: Travel with us to Israel and Jordan from May 27-June 6. Hosts have more than 40 years combined experience. Call 205-454-6273 or 256-565-1552.

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.

Want to know God?

Pastor Gary Burton
Pintlala Baptist Church

For anyone who wishes to know God, there is good news and there is challenging news. The good news is that God desires to be known and has taken the initiative in revealing Himself in Jesus Christ. The more challenging news is that God has no desire to be a casual acquaintance or a mere Facebook "Like." The God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, has demonstrated His great love for us with the death of His Son, Jesus, on the cross. By His life, with His death and through His resurrection, Jesus Christ has made possible authentic friendship with God.

Trust is the operative word for anyone who longs to know God. While one's trust is never perfect and often reflects a mixture of doubt, it is the single attitude that pleases God the most. When Jesus becomes the object of our trust, believing that He will forgive sins and will give us both peace and purpose, friendship with God begins to catch fire. Life is changed. Core values are transformed. The trajectory of life is Godward. Eternity is secured. Grace abounds. We are born anew.

Knowing God begins with trust. Getting to know God as a way of life continues with commitment to follow Christ. A new birth requires a new family, a new community and citizenship in a new kingdom. Everything becomes new as the old views and values are discarded. While trusting Jesus is very personal, it is never private. Such transformation must give way to public expression. One's personal relationship with Christ must be strengthened and nurtured in relationship with others. The local church is essential in the equation of Christian growth. It is the laboratory where love is learned and Christlikeness is formed.

Consequently knowing God by trusting Jesus is merely an introduction for many. Don't settle for just the introduction. Follow Christ by embracing the disciplines of baptism and church involvement, the study of Holy Scripture, praying and by being an agent of change in the world.

Trust Him and follow Him. Enjoy the friendship He offers.



Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Preparing to be prepared

When his truck's gas tank nears half full, my father-in-law can't rest until he finds a gas station to fill the tank again. He likes a full tank of gas.

I'll admit I've teased him about this obsession for years — even as I've prayed myself to a gas station many times while driving on fumes.

He likes to be prepared and knows what it is like to be on alert for a mandatory hurricane evacuation out of South Florida. A full tank of gas can change everything for the better in the midst of trying to flee north on I-95 with thousands of other cars.

I'm guessing that most Alabamians and north Georgia residents have a different perspective about a full tank of gas and other emergency supplies since the Jan. 28 weather catastrophe. I know I do.

It seems that everywhere I go, someone is talking about how he or she has put together an emergency kit for the car, is now leaving extra toiletries and clothes at the office or has worked out a new work-from-home plan when bad weather is predicted.

It is smart to learn from difficult experiences and develop plans for similar issues that might happen in the future. We now have firsthand experience of what is needed to be prepared, at least to some degree, and we certainly should not be taken off guard again.

But I wonder how long the memory will last and how prepared we will stay.

Staying up-to-date

Will our emergency kits be up-to-date a year from now? How about two years from now, especially if we don't have to use the kits in the next two years?

Think about your first-aid kit or other emergency kit you once put together. Do you know where it is? Have you replenished its supplies lately? Are there fresh batteries in it? Will the kit work if there is a true emergency?

And while this year's extreme level of winter weather for Alabama has given us plenty of time to think about being prepared, we also can plan to freshen up our kits annually around this time.

After all, February is now Disaster Preparedness Month for Alabama Baptists. It not only is a great time to review our personal emergency plans, but it also is a good time for churches to host activities for church members and the community related to the theme.

Disaster Relief funds

Church leaders might also use the annual observance as a time to review their disaster plans and appoint a few members of the congregation to serve as point people for any disaster-related situation that might occur.

Two good websites about this topic are www.sbd.org and ready.gov.

Be sure to check out the annual Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) offering resources at the sbd.org site as well.

A \$1 offering from every Alabama Baptist church member once a year would allow DR officials to maintain and upgrade necessary equipment in an ongoing fashion and allow them to respond immediately to a disaster rather than having to wait for funds to come in after a situation arises.

It also is a good time to consider signing up as a disaster relief volunteer. There are several ways you can serve, and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions provides training opportunities throughout the state. The sbd.org website is the best place to start. You also can call 1-800-264-1225 and ask for Mel Johnson. Be sure to tell him I suggested you call. I need all the brownie points I can get!

No matter what is right for you, your family and your church, at least think through a few aspects of being prepared for the "what ifs." It will relieve a lot of unnecessary stress and anxiety. 🍪

Rashional Extras...

Follow me on
Twitter:

@RashionalThts

"[Matthew's teachings on discipleship] are not just about making disciples but also about being disciples. ... [In Matthew 4, 8, 16, 19 and 28, he teaches that] Jesus takes priority above ... job security ... residential security ... financial security ... social obligation ... and life itself."

Craig S. Keener, Ph.D.
Professor of New Testament, Asbury Theological Seminary

"Go and make disciples ... baptizing them ... and teaching them."
Matthew 28:19–20

"When we choose to isolate ourselves from other believers, we are also isolating ourselves from the fullness of the Holy Spirit. All of us have spiritual gifts, but none of us have all the gifts of the Spirit. We have access to the benefits of all the gifts of the Spirit when we connect and intersect with God's people."

Gary Fenton
www.characterpath.com

"He must increase, but I must decrease."
John 3:30

How to cultivate missional (relational) communities

Five habits to develop

1. Listen to the Holy Spirit — Commit at least one hour per week, broken down in whatever time segments work best for you, to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This is not a time of speaking or asking for anything. It is letting the Lord speak to you.

2. Invite others to share a meal — Share at least one meal per week with someone in your faith community and one meal each week with someone not in your faith community or any faith community. Share a third meal with someone from either category.

3. Give a blessing — Seek to do three acts of blessings every week: one to a member of the Christian community, one to a non-Christian and one from either category.

4. Hear from the Gospels — Read from the Gospels each week in order to specifically learn more about and from Jesus, His ways and means. Read from other books as well but always include the Gospels.

5. Take inventory of the day — Be aware of opportunities to engage in mission on your day-to-day journey. At the end of each day, ask yourself how you responded to His promptings and if there were instances or opportunities where you resisted Jesus during the day.

Missional living is all about relationships. It's about getting close enough to people to listen, understand their hopes and dreams, and actually come to like and love them as individuals. That doesn't happen without living with and among people.

Lance Ford
Author and blogger
www.sentralizedgathering.com
(reprinted in *Facts & Trends*, Fall 2013)

"When Peter asked Jesus about what would happen concerning the disciple Jesus loved (John), Jesus responded that Peter should focus on his own discipleship rather than speculate about other followers. We must not permit our curiosity about others to distract us from following the Lord. He has His plans for us; He also has His plans for our Christian associates. But how He works in their lives is not my business; it is His business. Our business is to follow Him."

Dale Younce, Th.D.
University of Mobile
Explore the Bible commentary on **John 21:20–23**
Feb. 23 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*

"If your words do not match your tone and body language, people will believe your tone and body language before they will believe your words."

Kevin Eikenberry
Remarkable Learning
The Kevin Eikenberry Group

Being content

"Live each day the best you can. When the day is done, rest in the fact that you know you did all you could do. Trust Him to take care of the rest and wake up the next day ready to continue on in the journey.

"Stress is not a God thing. Stress happens when we let people's expectations become such a high priority in our life that they outrank God's expectations. ... Life is too short to let what other people think, say or do be your constant focus and goal. Do the best you can do, be the you He made you to be and listen when He says to listen.

"Our time with Him keeps us going and gives us the fuel we need to keep moving on our journey. Give up trying to please everyone. ... People are going to do and say what they want, it is not a reflection on you, it is a reflection on them."

Melissa Mann
An excerpt from her blog *Moments Along the Journey*
momentsalongthejourney.blogspot.com

MAKING PROGRESS?

What spiritual discipline are you focused on right now?
How do you plan to make progress in that area?

Email me at jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

Family MATTERS

FEBRUARY, 2014



Engaging Your Church in the Annual Children's Homes Offering

Nicole Walker, Communications Associate

There are over 400,000 children in the American foster care system, with 6,400 of those children right here in Alabama. Many children may not know what their future looks like, but one "yes" from a foster family can change a child's life forever. For over 120 years we have equipped families to be a part of caring for children, with the Davenport family being one of them.

The journey of foster parenting is not always an easy one—the situations these children have been through can be challenging. Despite the difficulties they might face as foster parents, Shawn and Vanda Davenport said yes to God's calling to walk with these children in the hardest times to provide them a stable, loving home. Little did they know that two children who came into their care, Caroline* and Samuel*, would call the Davenports their forever family.

"Our two children have not had an easy journey," Vanda shares about Caroline* and Samuel*. "But the fact is that they can now feel safe—every day they wake up it's getting better. My little boy lays down at night and asks about Heaven, and he has a mom and dad who understand where his fears come from because of the training we've received from Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. We are able to comfort him and tell him he has hope."

Not everyone is called to be foster parents, but everyone is called to be a part of caring for these children. God doesn't suggest caring for them—He commands it. How has God chosen you to be a part of taking care of the 6,400 children in foster care in Alabama?

One way to share and advocate the need to take care of these children is through the Annual Children's Homes Offering. Join us and other churches across Alabama on Sunday, May 11 to share the Davenports' testimony as foster parents with your congregation. Share with your church different ways they can be a part of our ministry, whether through foster parenting or supporting our foster care ministry. We will provide you with a free DVD, bulletin inserts, and donation envelopes. Contact Kay Taylor at ktaylor@abchome.org or call 1-888-720-8805 by March 10 to order your free materials.

*Names have been changed to protect the identities



Sign up for your free materials!

Join us and other churches across Alabama on Sunday, May 11 to share the Davenports' testimony as foster parents and the children we serve with your congregation. Share with your church different ways they can be a part of our ministry, whether through foster parenting or supporting our ministry. We will provide you with a free DVD, bulletin inserts, and donation envelopes. Contact Kay Taylor at ktaylor@abchome.org or call 1-888-720-8805 by **March 10** to order your free materials. Please include your name, contact phone number and email, current shipping address, your church and association.

***Our goal for the Annual Children's Offering is \$2.8 million. Encourage your church to be a part of our ministry to protect, nurture, and restore children and families!**



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

P.O. Box 361767
Birmingham, AL 35236

Telephone: (205) 982-1112
Toll Free: (888) 720-8805

www.alabamachild.org
www.pathwaysprofessional.com

Make sure that you check out the full list of events at www.alabamachild.org



On Facebook? Find us there at:
www.facebook.com/alabamachild
www.facebook.com/pathwaysprofessionalcounseling



On Twitter? Find us there at:
www.twitter.com/AlabamaChildOrg
www.facebook.com/pathwayscounsel

DID YOU KNOW?

ALPHA SOUND & LIGHTING CO.
PRO-AUDIO • STAGE LIGHTING • VIDEO PROJECTION

has been designing and installing pro-audio, video & stage lighting systems in churches and schools for **37 YEARS!**

...and **WE'RE IN YOUR BACKYARD!**
(well, practically...)

Contact Mike at 251-675-3358 or mike@aslgc.com

www.alphasoundandlighting.com Satsuma, AL • LIC #21607

Beeson hosts first Baptist-Methodist dialogue on differences, commonalities

They share a common history — impacted by frontier revivals, fervent prayer, belief in the Bible and an emphasis on missions — but Methodists and Baptists do have their differences. Things like baptism, church

governance and perseverance of the saints tend to divide the two groups.

The differences do not have to prevent the groups from working together for the Kingdom though, and Alabama Baptists are among a group attempting to develop relations.

The first international dialogue of the Baptist-Methodist Communique was held at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, Jan. 30 through Feb. 5.

With the theme of faith working through love, members of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the World Methodist Council discussed the history, theology and contemporary global situation of both denominations.

Timothy George, Beeson's founding dean, said the school was honored to be the host of the first dialogue.

It was an "excellent beginning to what will be a multiyear communication," George said.

George serves as the chair of the Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity of BWA and said Beeson previously hosted dialogues similar to this one between Catholics and Baptists and Pentecostals and Baptists.

In regards to some of the differences among Methodists and Baptists, George said, "If we dig deeply into these ... there are fractures at the core. We want to overcome these differences if we can without compromising who we are."

George said he hopes the dialogues help Christians learn how to share their faith better and do evangelism better.

A time of worship was held each day and participants attended Sunday services at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.

The group also visited Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, and the Civil Rights Institute.

Alabamians on program

Birmingham Baptist Association Executive Director Mike McLemore, Samford's Provost and Executive Vice President J. Bradley Creed and the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett welcomed delegates at the opening round of conversations.

Tim Macquiban, superintendent minister of the Cambridge Methodist Circuit and minister of Wesley Methodist Church, Cambridge, England, and Curtis Freeman, research professor and director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, N.C., co-chaired the dialogue.

The dialogue will continue for four or five more years, George said, and will include the same 17 participants.

The 2015 meeting is scheduled to meet in Singapore with a theme based on the nature of the church, with special attention to justification and sanctification. (BWA, TAB)

THEIR EMPIRE. HIS KINGDOM.

SON OF GOD

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX and LIGHTWORKERS MEDIA PRESENT "SON OF GOD" DIRGO MORGADO GREG HICKS ADRIAN SCHILLER DARWIN SHAW SEBASTIAN KNAPP JOE WREDDEN SIMON KUNZ PAUL MARC DAVIS MATTHEW GRAVELLE AMBER ROSE REVAH AND ROMA DOWNEY PRODUCED BY ROMA DOWNEY MARK BURNETT RICHARD BEUSER WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER SPENCER DIRECTED BY ROB GOLDBLUM WITH NIC YOUNG AND RICHARD BEUSER CHRISTOPHER SPENCER COLIN SWASH COSTUME DESIGNER ALEXANDER MARENCO ANNE MACNEE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CAMON FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS CHARLOTTE WHEATON KHADIJA ALAM MUSIC BY HANS ZIMMER & LORNE BALFE EDITOR LISA BERRARD PRODUCTION DESIGNER TONY MITCHELL CRISPIN REECE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRISTOPHER TITUS KING PETER GREENHALGH EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CARL PROCTOR COO NOUREDDINE ABERDINE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES JORDAN PRODUCED BY ALAN SPALDING EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROS LITTLE www.sonofgodmovie.com WRITTEN BY CHRISTA SCHIDEMAN DIRECTED BY BRIAN EDWARDS

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED: Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13

LIGHTWORKERS

IN THEATRES FEBRUARY 28

SEE IT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS • ADVANCE TICKETS NOW ON SALE
FOR GROUP SALES CALL 1-800-970-1858

SEE THE *Holy Land* THIS YEAR

JUNE 14-21, 2014

The Southeastern Bible College Grand Tour of the Holy Land

Join FMR State Senator Hank Erwin and Southeastern Bible College President Don Hawkins

FOR A FREE BROCHURE:
Call Premier Venture Travel at 205-620-0116 or visit www.pilgrimtours.com/groups/southeasternisrael.htm

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 2

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

SEEK WISDOM'S WAY Proverbs 1:1-19

Guide to Wisdom (1-6)

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings compiled mainly by Solomon but by several other figures as well. Wisdom is the knowledge and ability to make the right choices at the opportune time.

In the first six verses of the book, Solomon establishes the purpose for the Proverbs. The wise man will listen to the teachings and grow in godly wisdom. In today's society where the wisdom of the world is increasingly ungodly, it is important for Christians to obey the teachings of the Bible. Even some wisdom of the world that sounds good is not biblical. For example, the saying "God helps those who help themselves" occurs nowhere in the Bible and is actually quite the opposite of the gospel that declares that God helps those who cannot help themselves. Christians need to know what the Bible teaches so that we can stand against the teachings of the culture that are not biblical.

Key to Knowledge (7)

Proverbs 1:7 is well known because it is so important. Learning and practicing wisdom is what it means to fear the Lord, which leads to revering Him and obeying Him. The converse is that those who despise wisdom and discipline are fools. This does not indicate an intellectual deficiency. A fool in the Bible is not one who lacks intelligence. In fact someone who is a "fool" by the world's standards might in fact be wise by biblical standards. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 3:19 that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. A wise man according to the world's standard might say that it is foolishness to give money to the church, and that it is wise to try to look after yourself instead of others, but according to the Bible, these things are foolishness. Jim Elliot, the missionary to the Huaorani people of Ecuador who was killed by the tribe he was trying to evangelize, portrays true godly wisdom when he said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which

he cannot lose." While his actions are seen as foolishness by many people, he understood true godly wisdom. If we understand who God is, we ought to embrace His wisdom and turn from our own ideas of what wisdom is.

Admonition to Learn (8-9)

This portion shows how wisdom is to be understood as an instruction manual for fathers to sons, but the truths represented apply to all people. Solomon points out that obedience to the instruction results in the well-being of those who heed its admonition to learn. The Proverbs give timeless truths and general principles that lead to better living.

The world often sees the teaching of God as a hindrance or a burden, but to those who know Him, we realize that His teachings are really loving guidance that is for our spiritual prosperity and safety. Many people in our culture have a longing to be free, but the freedom they seek is a freedom from God's rules. In reality, this doesn't lead to true freedom but rather to slavery to sin. If God is not your master, then you make yourself master, which is idolatry and will ultimately lead to ruin — if not in this world, then when God administers final judgment. We need to remember that God's rules are not a burden (see what Jesus says in Matt. 11:28-30).

Warning Against Folly (10-19)

Solomon shows that many in the world will seek to lead us astray and try to get us to be involved in actions that are clearly not biblical. In today's society, people might not try to get you to help them murder someone to get their wealth, but there are many other ways that people try to lead us astray. People may want us to help them cheat at school or get involved in a financial form of deceit to scam others or the government. But these ways are not of God and will lead to our ruin and misery. If we stand firm in the fear of the Lord and His wisdom, it will enable us not to be swept away into sin and folly. We need to be grounded in the Word of God, to know what it says and to live it consistently so that we can live in the wisdom that God provides.

Bible Studies for Life By Catherine Lawrence Department of Religion, Samford University

GOOD WORK Genesis 1:28; 2:8-9, 15-17

For various reasons, many Christians struggle to enjoy their work. Perhaps one way to begin finding joy in what we do is to recognize that work is a gift from God. The early chapters of Genesis remind us of this truth.

(1:28)

On the sixth day of creation, God performed His climactic creative act: He made humankind, male and female, in His image. God blessed humanity with the ability to procreate and commissioned male and female to multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

God also gave humankind the responsibility to rule over all other animate life on earth (compare Ps. 8:6-8). This verse prompts at least two insights about work. One, tasks and responsibilities are associated with human existence from the very beginning. Two, human responsibility is a good thing. God's commands for human beings to multiply, fill the earth and subdue it and to rule over other living creatures appear in the immediate context of His blessing humanity (v. 28). Moreover these commands appear in the larger context of God's declaring all that He had made to be "very good" (v. 31). The tasks and responsibilities God gave to humankind, therefore, seem to represent one aspect of God's good creation. Indeed work is God's good gift to humanity.

(2:8-9, 15)

In Genesis 2 the creation scene shifts to a garden that God planted in Eden. The description of the garden in verse 9 suggests a place of lush beauty ("every tree that is pleasant to the sight") and abundant provision ("every tree that is ... good for food"). The term Eden even means "delight." God placed in the garden the man He had formed from the dust of the ground. The man's job: to till and to keep the garden (v. 15). That is, the man was to cultivate the

garden and thereby to care for it; he was to be the garden's caretaker. It seems the man's work also eventually included his naming the animals that God created (vv. 19-20). Thus, as was the case in 1:28, again here we understand that tasks and responsibilities are associated with human existence from the very beginning. Even in a place of unspoiled beauty like the garden in Eden, work still was required for the proper maintenance of God's good creation.

The immediate context of Genesis 2 gives no hint that the man's work could be characterized as odious or toilsome in nature. Only later, in the context of the devastating consequences of humankind's sin, does work become associated with toil and great difficulty (see Gen. 3:17-19). Even then, however, work itself is not said to be cursed; rather the ground is cursed. As a result, the man can no longer expect to till the ground with ease. The man instead will find himself expelled from the garden (see Gen. 3:23) into a harsh and demanding environment in which the ground will bring forth what he needs only by the hardest of his efforts.

Thanks be to God for His tender care even in the midst of such difficult and devastating circumstances (see Gen. 3:21).

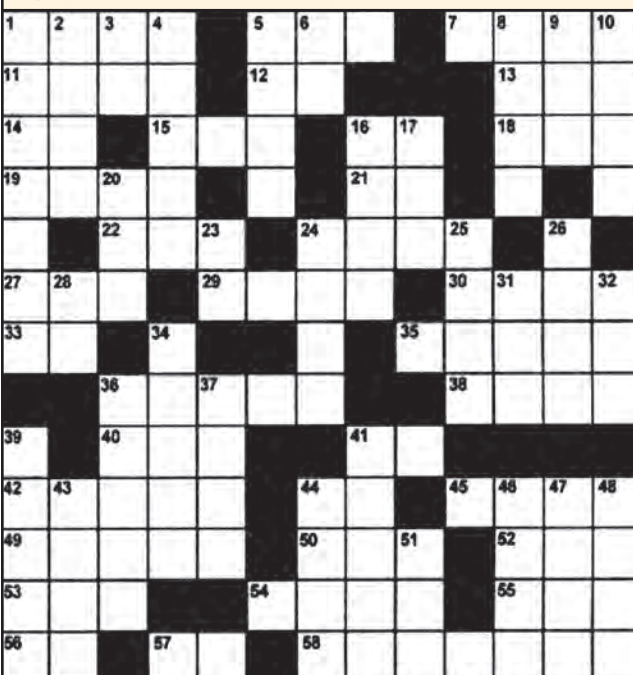
(2:16-17)

When the Lord God placed the man in the garden He gave the man freedom to enjoy the fruits of his labor. But the man was to enjoy his freedom within the context of obedience. God gave the man one prohibition: he must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which along with the tree of life stood in the middle of the garden (v. 9). Ironically the man's (and the woman's) ultimate failure to obey God on this point led directly to the man's work becoming toilsome.

Ultimately may these passages encourage Christians to embrace their tasks and responsibilities as good gifts from God. In future lessons we will explore additional ways to find joy in our work.

Christian Crossword

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Charity suffereth long, and is _____. (1 Cor. 13:4)
- They have spread a _____ by the wayside. (Ps. 140:5)
- Gather the wheat into my _____. (Matt. 13:30)
- A thought or concept.
- I will set him _____ high. (Ps. 91:14)
- Having to do with life science. (prefix)
- Compass direction.
- Glory to God in _____ highest.
- How long shall I _____ with you? (Mark 9:19)
- British word for bathroom.
- Some would even _____ to die. (Rom. 5:7)
- _____, _____, C.
- _____, and it shall be given you. (Matt. 7:7)
- _____, Father. (Mark 14:36)
- And did all _____ the same spiritual meat. (1 Cor. 10:3)
- Behold, the _____ wept. (Ex. 2:6)
- And his _____ went throughout all Syria.

- (Matt. 4:24)
- Decimeter. (abbr.)
- Calls for someone in a public place.
- Far _____ all principality, and power. (Eph. 1:21)
- The veil of the temple was _____ in twain. (Matt. 27:51)
- Nancy. (abbr.)
- _____ angel of the Lord.
- _____ and walk? (Matt. 9:5)
- Before Christ. (abbr.)
- He is _____; yet is he clean. (Lev. 13:40)
- Gets up in the morning. (Ezek. 27:29)
- Side away from the wind.
- One of the Three Stooges.
- A type of deer.
- The father shall be divided against the _____. (Luke 12:53)
- Saint. (abbr.)
- But also _____ die at Jerusalem. (Acts 21:13)
- His _____ was cleansed. (Matt. 8:3)
- Down**
- Boaz was of the _____ of Elimelech. (Ruth 3:2)
- "I've got a great _____!"
- Compass direction.
- Sweet fruit grown on palm trees.
- Christmas.
- Inhabitants of _____ dor. (Josh. 17:11)
- No man _____ was _____ to open the book. (Rev. 5:3)
- City in Brazil.
- About _____ there shone great light round me. (Acts 22:6)
- Find the _____ wrapped in swaddling clothes. (Luke 2:12)
- One type of tide.
- A type of vermin.
- Kilobytes. (abbr.)
- He is _____ also to save. (Heb. 7:25)
- When he saw Jesus _____ off, he ran. (Mark 5:6)
- So be it.
- _____ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
- Die in the flower of their _____. (1 Sam. 2:33)
- Eastern Standard Time. (abbr.)
- And _____ him that is high. (Ezek. 21:26)

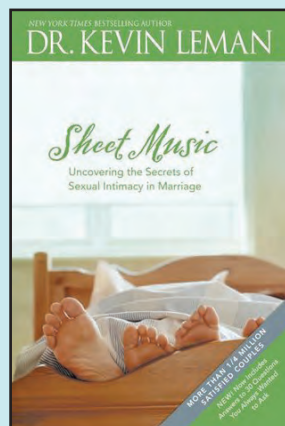
- Pay tithe of mint, _____ and cumin. (Matt. 23:23)
- I have commanded my sanctified _____. (Isa. 13:3)
- They went their ways, one to his _____. (plural) (Matt. 22:5)
- If I knew you were coming, I'd have baked _____.
- They that count it pleasure to _____. (2 Pet. 2:13)
- The fire causeth the waters to _____. (Isa. 64:2)
- Who loveth God love his brother _____. (1 John 4:21)
- Several popes sharing one name.
- Lest ye _____ your God. (Josh. 24:27)
- To knock on a door; form of music.



TOP 10

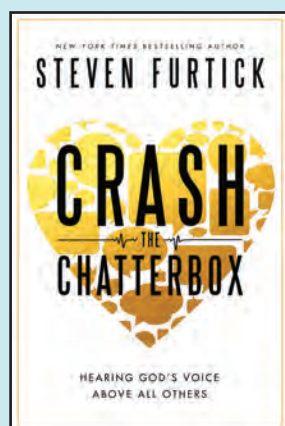
downloaded books from iTunes

CHRISTIANITY



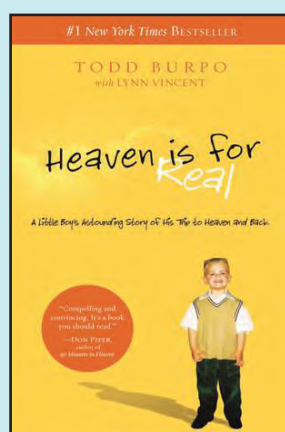
1. Sheet Music

By Kevin Leman
(Tyndale House)



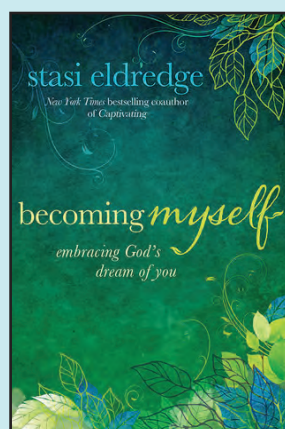
2. Crash the Chatterbox

By Steven Furtick
(The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group)



3. Heaven is for Real

By Todd Burpo and
Lynn Vincent
(Thomas Nelson)



4. Becoming Myself

By Stasi Eldredge
(David C Cook)

5. Four Blood Moons

By John Hagee
(Worthy)

6. Jesus Calling

By Sarah Young
(Thomas Nelson)

7. Uncommon Marriage

By Tony Dungy, Lauren
Dungy and Nathan
Whitaker (Tyndale House)

8. The Power of Right Believing

By Joseph Prince
(FaithWords)

9. The People Factor

By Van Moody
(Thomas Nelson)

10. The Love Dare

By Alex Kendrick and
Stephen Kendrick
(B&H Publishing)

Source: iTunes at press time
(The list includes paid books only.)



Sonofgodresources.com photo

Talking about Jesus

Alabama Baptists expect to use 'Son of God' film as outreach

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Fans of History Channel's "The Bible" miniseries were hoping the Feb. 28 national release of the film "Son of God" would open the door to more conversations about the life of Jesus.

The film, produced by Mark Burnett and Roma Downey and adapted from footage shot during the filming of "The Bible," brings the full story of Jesus' teaching and ministry to the big screen — the first time it's been done by a major Hollywood studio in more than 50 years. Such a film is long overdue, Burnett said.

"A story larger than life needs to be experienced larger than life," he said.

"Now people can bring their family, friends and neighbors to experience together the incredible story of Jesus," Downey said. "We pray this film will really spread the word about Jesus' love and sacrifice for all of us."

Many religious leaders, including Baptists in Alabama, are citing the movie as a natural opportunity to talk about the gospel.

Eureka Baptist Church, Talladega, in Coosa River Baptist Association, planned an outing to see the film March 2. Pastor Jason Grissom hoped the film would encourage as much discussion as the miniseries did.

"I was inundated with questions after 'The Bible' miniseries and caught off guard by its popularity and the thoroughness of questions asked. So this event is a means to be ready to give an account of the hope that is within us," Grissom said.

'So much to learn'

Grissom said he hoped to use the film as an outreach event as well. He encouraged members to invite unchurched friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers to see the movie and join them for dinner and discussion afterward.

Starting conversations about Jesus was one of the goals Burnett and Downey had for the film.

"We don't want the experience to end for audiences when the credits roll," Burnett said. "There is so much

to learn from and apply to our everyday lives in the things Jesus did and said."

A companion study written by Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., and published by LifeWay Christian Resources offers a guide to churches who want to dig deeper into the life lessons of Jesus' ministry, Burnett said. "Son of God: The Life of Jesus in You" is a six-session DVD small group Bible study. Topics include baptism, temptation, suffering, death, resurrection and ministry.

Studying the life of Jesus

The study also features Warren explaining how you can find your purpose in studying the life of Jesus. The study was released Feb. 15 and is available at LifeWay Stores and LifeWay.com/SonofGod.

"Through the 'Son of God' study, people will receive practical teaching on the life of Jesus and its impact on individual lives and life purpose. Jesus' teaching transforms from the inside out," Warren said.

After Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" made \$612 million, observers expected to see more films about Jesus. Though several Bible-inspired films are currently in production, it has been 10 years since "Passion" was in theaters, which means many young people have never seen a depiction of Jesus' life on film, said Heath Miller, minister to students at Golden Springs Baptist Church, Anniston, in Calhoun Baptist Association.

Miller said he planned to attend "Son of God" on its opening weekend and hoped some of his students, most of whom were preschoolers when "Passion" was released, would come along. He believes the greatest potential of the film is that it will open doors for believers to talk to others about Jesus.

"Any time that I can do something to initiate spiritual conversations with my students, I want to take advantage of that," Miller said. "I don't know that the film itself serves as a witnessing tool, but having this film in theaters everywhere will have people talking about Jesus with their friends, co-workers, or in my case, students, and open doors for Christians to explain the significance of what Jesus did on our behalf." ❏

North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary Ara Torosian (right) often eats at the Döner House in Burbank, Calif., with his friends and uses the opportunity to build a relationship with restaurant proprietor Alex Keshishi. Torosian, an Iranian immigrant who planted Armenian Fellowship Church of Burbank, is a Week of Prayer missionary for NAMB.



NAMB photo

'Paying a price for Christ'

Iranian house church pastor flees country to US, now plants churches in Southern California

For four years between 2005 and 2009, Iranian house church pastor Ara Torosian faced sporadic yet consistent physical and emotional abuse at the hands of his government. Caught trying to smuggle Bibles into the country, Torosian was constantly being pressured to reveal the identities of other Christian leaders.

"They tried to kill my spirit," said Torosian, now a North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planter in Southern California. "And they are good at it. We decided to leave Iran because of family security and freedom."

But it was during those four years of house arrest and constant surveillance in Iran that Southern Baptists were getting to know Torosian, and he did not even know it. The International Mission Board had sent out prayer requests for Torosian during those four years, and Los Angeles pastor Robby Pitt was one of those praying for Torosian. Pitt shared that with Torosian when they met in Southern California in 2009.

Southern Baptists a blessing

"I realized then that Southern Baptists knew me even before I arrived here," said Torosian, whose American mentor in Iran had been Southern Baptist. "That makes me feel so strong. I found out that Southern Baptists are a big family that cares for each other. It's been a real blessing. I realized I'm not alone."

Torosian is one of six missionaries featured by NAMB as part of its 2014 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) promotion. Los Angeles, where Torosian serves, is one of 32 Send North America cities NAMB is bringing special emphasis

and resources to in its effort to help Southern Baptists start 15,000 new churches in 10 years. Half of NAMB's financial support comes from the AAEO.

Four years after arriving in Southern California, Torosian's Southern Baptist family has been a key partner in multiple church planting and ministry efforts. In 2010, Torosian started what may be the

first Armenian-language Southern Baptist church in the United States.

The growing congregation draws Armenian speakers from a variety of countries and backgrounds — including Armenia, Iran and Russia. Most Armenians consider themselves Armenian Orthodox Christians. Historically Armenia was the first government in the world to make Christianity its official religion.

But the official language of the Orthodox Church is ancient and nearly obsolete, Torosian said. Most Armenians know little about the gospel, he noted.

"They talked in a language I didn't understand," said Masis, Torosian's brother-in-law, who came to faith in Christ through the ministry of Armenian Fellowship Church of Burbank. "I didn't know anything about Jesus or His story."

Masis and his wife both gave their lives to Christ in the last several years after Torosian had been sharing the gospel with them for more than 15 years. The couple finally made a decision for Christ after Torosian challenged them to pray for their long-standing desire for children. When God answered that prayer, they started attending Armenian Fellowship, heard the gospel and responded affirmatively to it.

Torosian himself understands the challenge of coming to faith in Christ from an Armenian background. After a high-school injury put a promising soccer career on

hold, the teenager began to soul-search — looking at a variety of religious traditions, including Islam, Hinduism and finally biblical Christianity. After committing his life to Christ, he got involved in the growing house church movement in Iran, eventually starting his own house church.

On the way back to Iran from Turkey in 2005, Torosian and some friends were caught trying to smuggle Farsi Bibles into Iran. After three days of extreme physical and emotional cruelty, the government released him but he spent the next two years under house arrest and another two years under constant surveillance. During those four years, he said, every conversation was carefully monitored — making witnessing and fellowship with others in the house church movement nearly impossible.

"I told my wife, 'This isn't what God called us to do,'" Torosian said. "I'm making a lot of money. I'm giving to the church. But I can't attend church and I can't get involved in ministry. We can't do anything here." So in 2009, Torosian gave up a profitable job in Iran to be a refugee in the United States.

Not long after Torosian arrived in the United States he started Armenian Fellowship with the help of Southern Baptists. But his ministry doesn't stop with the church he started. Torosian feels particularly called to reach out to Muslims, which has led to a second Farsi-language church plant in Southern California.

"I know that there are freedoms here — freedom to talk, freedom of religion," Torosian said. "I want to take this oppor-

tunity — each sacred moment — to preach the gospel."

Torosian believes he is able to do much of what he does only because of the support of Southern Baptists.

"In my experience from Iran, I know being alone can kill your spirit," Torosian said. "I know how loneliness can make life very hard. Now in this situation that we have in the U.S., the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and prayers make me so strong. Anytime I wake up and I start to work, or preach or share the good news, I say to myself, 'Now lots of people, they are behind me, praying for me, praying for the ministry, giving generously to missionaries through Annie Armstrong and other ministries around the world.'"

Persecuted Christians

Though Torosian understands first hand the lives of persecuted Christians globally, he believes living as a Christian in the United States may be even more difficult. Unlike places where legal persecution exists like Iran, the U.S. culture today includes pervasive attacks on Christian morality and other forms of persecution.

"Don't feel sorry for me," Torosian said. "Don't say 'poor Ara.' You are paying a price for Christ, to go to church every week, to go to your cell groups. Your life is a big witness, how you survive in this world. So keep trusting Him. I'm not the hero. You are the hero."

For more information about Torosian and his ministry in Southern California, visit www.anniearmstrong.com. (NAMB)



NAMB photo

Ara Torosian, his wife, Anet, and daughter, Emily, have made Los Angeles their home, leaving behind a life in Iran.

FIRMLY PLANTED

ROOTED IN THE GOSPEL

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
North American Missions

March 2-9, 2014

Alabama goal: \$6,100,000
National goal: \$70,000,000

**ANNIE
ARMSTRONG**
EASTER OFFERING®

anniearmstrong.com

NORTH AMERICAN
MISSION BOARD