

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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'WE NEED the Spirit'



Photo by Neisha Fuson

The Brooklyn Tabernacle Pastor Jim Cymbala leads the closing session at the State Evangelism Conference at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, Feb. 24–25.

Cymbala calls for 'pure gospel' at Alabama Evangelism Conference

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Writing a news article describing the closing service of the Feb. 24–25 Alabama Baptist State

Evangelism Conference could never do the experience justice. While only the 1,550-plus onsite participants will ever truly understand the impact of being present that night, the nearly 100 online viewers likely also managed to walk away with a strong sense of what took place.

Pastors who preach with the alliteration method might pull out powerful, piercing, poignant and painful as descriptors of the finale to the event held at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery. Basically it would have been difficult to find a person present who would not agree the Holy Spirit engulfed the sanctuary and, for a little more than two hours, moved methodically and individually throughout the crowd.

From the opening Gaither Vocal Band-style hymn sing led by Guy

Penrod — most noted for his long, silver hair and role with the Gaithers — to the raw, blunt challenge of Jim Cymbala — pastor of New York's Brooklyn Tabernacle, author and former college basketball player — time stood still.

Eyes across the room welled with tears throughout the night, at different times and for different reasons. Shouts of "Amen" and "Preach it, brother" — as well as a few old-time, Holy Ghost-driven cries aloud — echoed off and on.

Some were taken back to specific life-changing moments as the words of "The Old Rugged Cross," "He's Watching Me," "Nothing But the Blood" and "He Hideth My Soul" transformed their surroundings. Others dealt with current struggles,

hurts and difficulties as Penrod's delivery of "He Is Able" and "The Old Rugged Cross Made the Difference" stirred the crowd, ending with a rousing, extended standing ovation.

'We are salt and light'

"Life can be difficult," Penrod said. "There are challenges, failures ... children ... but no matter what the future might look like, know we are salt and light and we have been filled with the Holy Spirit and are called to minister with the love of Jesus in us."

Cymbala picked up on Penrod's mention of difficult situations and spent a few minutes at the end of the service focusing on prodigal children, drawing the crowd in even closer as hundreds flooded the altar to pray and be prayed for regarding

their heartache over loved ones.

The night closed with a second extended standing ovation "with cheers like at a football game," Cymbala said after leading the group in "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior."

However, before the final prayer Cymbala was anything but gentle as he challenged Alabama Baptists and others present to return to a purity of the gospel.

Starting with Acts 1 and pointing to Acts 8, 10 and 13 as well as 1 Corinthians 2:4 throughout his sermon, Cymbala said the life of the believer is not about trivial matters but about spreading the Good News.

The last thing Jesus said on earth — "... you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and

(See 'It's not about,' page 7)

International Mission Board leader wrapping up tenure

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

International Mission Board (IMB) President Tom Elliff, 70, shocked Southern Baptists with a Feb. 26 announcement that he's ready to step down from his role.

"I didn't choose it, but God spoke to me through His word," Elliff shared during a telephone press conference a few hours after he told the IMB board of trustees

during its meeting in Austin, Texas.



ELLIFF

"Based on what (my wife, Jeannie, and I) believe to be the Lord's clear leading, today I am asking our chairman to appoint a search team to seek my successor," he wrote in an open letter he read to trustees. "I pledge my eager and devoted service as your president until my successor is chosen and in office. But I am urging the search team to act with

utmost expediency ... not with careless haste or abandon, but with all prayerful and tireless deliberation."

A 15-member search committee was named that day, and Alabama Baptist Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, is on the committee.

IMB trustee Richard Richie, pastor of Flint Baptist Church, Decatur, told *The Alabama Baptist*, "I am sure Dr. Elliff and the executive team, along with the trustees and missionaries, will continue to

(See 'Disappointed,' page 17)

COMMENT

Baptists Got What They Prayed For

Going to an Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference is a little like going to an Atlanta Braves baseball game. You know the caliber of the event will be outstanding. Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, is as adept as Braves manager Fredi Gonzales in making sure everyone experiences top-notch “players” in action and, of course, the “players” always give their best effort.

Sometimes special promotions draw fans to Turner Field to watch the Braves and sometimes special promotions attract pastors and others to the annual two-day event designed to encourage Christians to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Just as every baseball player hopes to be a part of history — like seeing a perfect game by a pitcher or four home runs by a batter — every Baptist prays the State Evangelism Conference will witness an outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit.

Those attending the 2014 conference held at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, got their wish. They were part of an excellent conference, and those who stayed to the end were a part of history. What God’s Spirit did in the closing service will be talked about for years to come by the more than 1,500 people who overflowed into the choir area and into extra seats across the front and down each aisle of the Eastmont auditorium.

The conference got off to a strong start with former Alabama Baptist pastor Steve Gaines, now pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., headlining the opening Monday evening program. Gaines was never better as he called Baptists to fervent prayer. From the opening session, everyone knew this was going to be a good conference.

Gilbreath’s special promotion took the stage Tuesday morning. For the first time in Evangelism Conference history, a father and his two sons took turns preaching. Their sermons ranged from suffering to missions to staying encouraged along the journey (see story, page 6) but the rare sight of the “Three Pitmans” — father Bob and sons Vance and Brett — on the same program will be remembered as an example of what God can do with a godly family.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Ballgames always have a lot of related activities and so did the Evangelism Conference. Tuesday at noon Alabama’s Woman’s Missionary Union sponsored a Ministers’ Wives Luncheon (see story, page 8). Participants filled the church’s banquet area to hear Dianne Bentley, wife of Gov. Robert Bentley, describe what it is like to be married to a public figure. Ministers’ wives have some of the same problems because their spouses belong to the church as well as to them and their family.

‘Big bats’

It was not until the late innings — the final session on Tuesday evening — that the “big bats” came to the plate.

By 4:30 p.m. participants were already lined up waiting for 6 p.m. when doors to the auditorium opened and they could claim seats to hear music artist Guy Penrod. Penrod is equally renowned for his cowboy look as for his fame as a former member of the Gaither Vocal Band. Within minutes of the doors opening every seat was claimed and latecomers overflowed into the choir area.

If one anticipated a musical concert like those featured at a Gaither Homecoming, it was not to be. Instead Penrod asked the congregation to sing along with him through a litany of old hymns. Only once during the evening did the tenor demonstrate his famous voice and that was on the last song. The rest of the 45 minutes was like an old fashion “singspiration.” It was amazing to sense the Spirit of God moving across the auditorium as voices lifted the familiar words of old hymns

that affirmed faith in Jesus Christ and care for His hurting children. It was worship. That is the only way to describe it.

The meeting could have ended right there and everyone would have said it was an outstanding State Evangelism Conference. Instead Penrod sat down on the front row and joined the others to hear the closing sermon delivered by another “big bat” — Jim Cymbala, pastor of The Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York City. What God did through him was the final piece that made this year’s Evangelism Conference historic.

Cymbala’s “swings” were hard. He called the emphasis on church growth the “root” of the church’s problem. “Nowhere in the Bible does it say have a big church,” he declared. He chided preachers for being “mad, mean and angry.” “Sinners are not our enemy. They are our missions field,” he pointed out.

He mocked sharing the Four Spiritual Laws with strangers. “Mechanical witnessing programs are going nowhere in today’s world, but if you preach with love you will get through,” he told the overflow crowd. Dealing with the race question he asked, “How can you reject someone for whom Christ died?”

Cymbala’s conclusions did not come from his philosophy of ministry. Rather he related personal experiences of trial and error in ministry that shaped his conclusions and resulted in an approach. His stories about praying for a wayward daughter, about getting trapped in ministry expectations, about trying to communicate with a street-wise 12-year-old all touched the hearts of those gathered and helped them understand the conclusions the New Yorker spat out in rapid-fire order.

With mighty “swings” he made his listeners examine the message they preach, the methods they use and the motivations that propel them. Sometimes the words hurt. Always the words brought hope.

And then came the invitation, which was not related to the sermon. Instead Cymbala acted on what he sensed while sharing a story about his daughter. During a prayer time he asked those burdened for wayward children or grandchildren to stand. Then he asked all those who wanted to be part of a special prayer for these waywards to come to the altar. Hundreds came. The meeting closed with the New York pastor leading an emotional season of prayer and claiming the return of those for whom he prayed.

When it was over, participants were exhausted. The two days had touched every emotion. The worship had been as pure as possible. God’s Spirit had brought conviction and God’s messengers had pointed ways toward change. Baptists got what they prayed for — an outpouring of the Spirit of God. No manager, no player, no team can make that happen but when it does, it is great to be a part of that kind of history.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

ARTICLE SELECTION

“Perplexed and disappointed” was my response to the Feb. 13 article “Outraged and shocked” (Highland Park children’s minister charged with sexual abuse).

The information that was shared by *The Alabama Baptist* was simply a “regurgitation” of news that had been adequately reported by secular media. According to the publication’s

website, “The Alabama Baptist, Inc. will provide information, inspiration, interpretation and involvement for Baptists of Alabama and others to help encourage and equip them to live out the principles of Christian discipleship.”

I found this article to be neither “encouraging nor equipping” for that purpose. No doubt the actions that were reported in the article are some

of the most horrific and devastating to so many people on so many levels. However, I believe an educational approach would have been much more useful and effective.

Perhaps an article that focuses on the (see ‘Letters,’ page 18)





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

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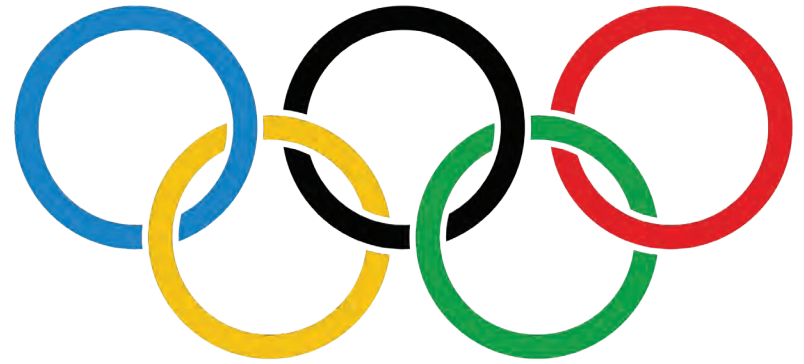
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Farewell Sochi



Alabamians part of evangelistic outreach, found open spirit among Russians

Two Alabama Baptist Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) leaders and a jazz band from the University of Mobile (UMobile) were among the hundreds of Christians spreading the gospel in Sochi during the Olympics' Engage Sochi event.

Andrea Mullins, director of New Hope Publishers, a division of national WMU in Birmingham, led a group of seven WMU-connected women from four states.

"We had a great time, and the Russian people were so warm," said Mullins, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. "Like no other Olympics I've been to, there was such a hunger and openness among the Russians. It just blew me away."

Mullins said the people interacted easily with the Americans visiting Sochi.

"They wanted to talk to us," she said, noting teachers were encouraging the school children to talk to the Americans so they could practice their English.

"It was fun to watch them approach us and say hello in English but then not know what else to say," Mullins noted. "I would say 'My name is Andrea' in Russian and then they would get excited and we would attempt to talk some more."

The WMU team interacted with the local people for about a week, Mullins said, noting having two members who are trained in clowning helped draw attention to their group.

They also captivated crowds with face painting and balloon art.

"Our clowns drew a crowd, and we would give out pins created by the IMB (International Mission Board) that had the plan of salvation on them in both English and Russian," she said.

The other Alabama Baptist on the team — Susan Bartholomew, WMU director for Baldwin Baptist Association — also brought Alabama pins and scarves, which were popular among the people, Mullins said.

"It was an amazing ministry trip," Bartholomew said.

The UMobile jazz band was able to unite its tunes with band members' desire to invite the world to join in worship to God. As its music drew crowds, band members took breaks to engage spectators in conversations and give away pins.

Marc Hooks, co-director of Engage Sochi, noted that a major part of the Engage Sochi



BP photo

University of Mobile jazz band was part of the Engage Sochi team, uniting its tunes with band members' desire to invite the world to join in worship to God. As its music drew crowds, band members took breaks to engage spectators in conversations.

strategy was to use the specialized trading pins that facilitated sharing the gospel.

"The unofficial Olympic spectator sport is pin trading," Hooks said. "People coming to the Olympics love to trade pins, so we designed a pin that is fun to trade, that people like and that they want, but has elements that allow us to share the gospel."

Colors on the pin represented key aspects of the plan of salvation — "the same five colors as the Olympic rings," Hooks said, "so we can tie it all together and share God's love with the people here."

Nearly 200 Southern Baptists participated in Engage Sochi. And more than 13,000 Engage Sochi trading pins and gospel tracts were distributed. Three people told of committing their lives to Jesus and more than 130 contacts were made with individuals who wanted to learn more about Him.

The Engage Sochi strategy is more than pins and gospel presentations, Hooks noted. There is a church-planting focus as well.

"Church planting is based on forming relationships. So what our Engage Sochi folks are doing here is the building blocks for new churches to be started," he said. (TAB, BP)



Photo by Vickie Anderson

Alabama Baptist Andrea Mullins (right) talks with two Russian women in Sochi.



Photo by David Phillip

(L to r) Vickie Anderson (Tenn.), Susan Bartholomew (Ala.), Treva Mahon (Texas), Andrea Mullins (Ala.), Dana Stairs (Ky.), Suzy Wall (Texas) and Cherry Peach (Texas) represented WMU in Sochi.



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.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Center Point**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary March 16. Mike Shaw will speak at 10 a.m. and Ryan Whitley will speak at 3 p.m. There will be a reunion of members, former members and guests. Several Memory Rooms will be open at 9 a.m. Buddy McGohon is interim pastor. ► **The Westwood Ballet and Irish Dance Ministry of Westwood Church, Birmingham**, will hold the performance "The Heartbeat of Ireland" on March 15, 6 p.m. at Minor High School Theatre. Steve Potts is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Evergreen Church** will hold revival March 16–19, beginning with the Sunday evening service at 6 p.m. Monday–Wednesday services will be at 7 p.m. Dennis J. Brunet will speak and Bill Short will lead music. For information call the church at 251-578-1162. Jim Collins is pastor.

DEKALB

► **Mount Flat Church, Crossville**, will celebrate its 130th anniversary March 16, 2 p.m. Refreshments will follow the service. All former pastors and friends are invited. Wayne Tarvin is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host The 39er's C.L.U.B. (Christians Living Under the Blood!) nondenominational luncheon March 11, 11 a.m. John Baxter, pastor of Providence Methodist Church, will speak. For reservations call 334-684-9617. Mike Shirah is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **First Church, Athens**, will hold its Women's Conference on March 15, 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Author and singer Gwen Smith will speak. For information call 256-431-4962. Edwin Jenkins is pastor.

MADISON

► **Murphy Hill Church**,

will hold a gospel singing March 16, 6 p.m. featuring New Ground. For information call 256-828-3171. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Sardis Church, Boaz**, will hold spring revival March 9–12. Phil Waldrep will speak Sunday morning and evening with music by Phil Cross and Poet Voices; Phil Hoskins will speak Monday night with music by Bruce Taliaferro; Robert Smith will speak Tuesday night with music by Channing Eleton; and Junior Hill will speak Wednesday night with music by Katy Peach. Services will begin at 6 p.m. Sunday night and 7 p.m. Monday–Wednesday. Everyone is welcome. Mike Goforth is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► Bill Young and Steve Norris were ordained as deacons Feb. 23 at **Sixth Street Church, Alexander City**. Matt Haines is pastor. ☞

Stephen Ministry to hold workshop at Dawson

A "one-to-one lay caring ministry" taking place in congregations around the country will hold an introductory workshop at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, on April 5.

Founded in 1975, Stephen Ministry is conducted in congregations that use the "Stephen Series" system, which includes training, resources, structure and ongoing support that congregations use to

equip laypeople, known as Stephen Ministers, to provide one-to-one Christian care to hurting people.

The word "Stephen" in the ministry's name is derived from St. Stephen, the first layperson commissioned by the apostles to provide caring ministry for those in need (Acts 6).

There are three groups of people involved in the Stephen Ministry structure: Stephen Leaders, who

establish and direct Stephen ministry in a congregation; Stephen Ministers, who are congregation members trained by Stephen Leaders to offer Christian care to people experiencing difficult times; and Care Receivers, the people who receive care from a Stephen Minister.

Stephen Ministry is currently operating in six Alabama Baptist churches and is active in seven congregations in the Birmingham metro area. Nationwide the ministry operates in 216 Southern Baptist churches, according to Lori Kem, Stephen Ministry workshop coordinator. More than 11,000 congregations in the United States, 10 Canadian provinces and 24 other countries are enrolled in the Stephen Series.

The Stephen Ministry Introductory Workshop hosted by Dawson on April 5 will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the church, with registration beginning at 8 a.m.

This three-session workshop is designed to help congregations catch a vision for strengthening their caring ministry through equipping laypeople as caregivers. Participants also will learn caregiving skills they can use immediately.

The sessions in the workshop include: "Ministering to those experiencing grief," "An introduction to Stephen Ministry" and "How to care in a distinctively Christian way."

To register, call 314-428-2600 or visit www.smore.com/mwyz. For more information about Stephen Ministry, visit www.stephenministries.org. (Julie Payne)



Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Seminary in Liberia re-opens after forced closure

PAYNESVILLE, Liberia — A labor judge's Jan. 6 order shutting down the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary has been lifted, the school's interim president announced Feb. 21.

National Labor Court Judge Comfort Natt ordered the closure over the seminary's refusal to pay a \$300,000 judgment to a former president who sued the school after his removal in 2007.

Richard Wilson, a Mercer University professor on loan for a one-year appointment at the institution described as the crown jewel of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, said after negotiations with former President Lincoln Brownell's legal team, the shutdown was lifted Feb. 14.

Wilson, who arrived in Monrovia on Jan. 4 with plans to begin work immediately, said he entered his office for the first time Feb. 17. His installation as sixth president of a school attempting to rebuild after decades of civil war and recent controversy over leadership changes in Liberian Baptist life is scheduled for March 13.

"We lost time because of the obstacles in our path, but we did not lose hope," Wilson said after meeting with administrative staff both individually and as a group. "There is important work to be done on this historic campus and we will see that the vision and mission of our Baptist founders in Liberia will be honored."

Bible donation project big success for LifeWay

NASHVILLE — In fall 2013, LifeWay Christian Stores set a goal of donating 100,000 Hindi language Bibles across South Asia, but customers gave enough for twice that many.

"LifeWay has proven once again it is an organization with a heart for the world," said Tom Eliff, president of the International Mission Board (IMB). "Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine The Thomas Project would be such an overwhelming success."

Named for the disciple believed to have been the first Christian missionary to the region, The Thomas Project invited customers at LifeWay's 186 stores to purchase a Bible for \$5 to send to South Asia. Customers resonated with The Thomas Project, a joint venture with LifeWay Christian Stores, B&H Publishing and the IMB. Churches continued to donate even after the initiative ended in November 2013, with one church donating enough to print 1,200 Bibles in January. But not only did LifeWay stores sell the Bibles, a LifeWay employee missions team also will go to South Asia in spring 2014 to help IMB workers distribute the Bibles.

Incarcerated women earn degrees through NOBTS

ST. GABRIEL, La. — Fifteen women prisoners earned associate degrees in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's (NOBTS) winter commencement at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in St. Gabriel, La.

The seminary's Leavell College issued the associate degrees in Christian ministry Jan. 14, marking a significant milestone in the development of the certificate-training program launched in 2011 as a pilot.

The program at the women's prison is the seminary's first effort to provide training for female inmates. Nineteen women inmates graduated with ministry certificates in 2012. Now 15 inmates are one step closer to receiving fully accredited bachelor's degrees.

The women's prison program followed in the footsteps of three other successful NOBTS programs for male inmates at Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, La.; Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, Miss.; and Philips State Prison in Buford, Ga.

GuideStone releases 2014 tax guide edition

DALLAS — The 2014 edition of GuideStone's annual tax return preparation and federal reporting guide is now available. In this guide, both active and retired ministers will find step-by-step instructions, sample forms and detailed help in understanding the latest tax laws. The guide also contains a special supplement addressing the key points of the recent housing allowance ruling. Additionally church treasurers and other church leaders will find a valuable resource in the guide's special section about important federal requirements for churches.

"This year, it's particularly important for ministers to have access to this resource," said O.S. Hawkins, GuideStone president. "From late changes to tax law to challenges to the housing allowance, ministerial tax issues grow more complicated each year." ☞



Photo by Bethany Rogers

Members of Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, hold their first service in their newly completed church facilities Feb. 23. Most of the church's facilities were destroyed after a mile-wide EF4 tornado tore through Tuscaloosa on April 27, 2011.



Photo by Bethany Rogers

The new \$7 million facility was completed in early 2014, and the Feb. 23 service announced to the area that Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, is back and ready to make a difference.



Photo by Bethany Rogers

Pastor Larry Corder surveys the church's damage in the aftermath of the April 27, 2011, tornadoes that hit Tuscaloosa.

God is faithful

Alberta Baptist completes building, worships in new facility after April 27, 2011, tornadoes

Members of Alberta Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, returned home Feb. 23 when they held their first service in the newly completed church facilities.

Alabamians will not soon forget the events of April 27, 2011, the day a severe outbreak of deadly tornadoes ravaged the state.

Alberta Baptist, located on University Boulevard and central to the Alberta community in the city, was one victim to the wreckage of that day's events after a mile-wide EF4 tornado tore through the heart of Tuscaloosa.

With most of its facilities destroyed, the church was left with many pieces to pick up and decisions to make. In the aftermath, Open Door Baptist Church, Northport, welcomed Alberta Baptist members to worship with them as they studied the best plan for the church's future.

It was soon decided to rebuild in the same location and continue serving in the Alberta community. The new \$7 million facility was completed in early 2014, and the Feb. 23 service announced to the area the church is back and ready to make a difference.

The service was filled with many joyous moments as church members celebrated

how God had brought them back and blessed them with more than they could have imagined.

'He did it'

Colby Mouchette, the church's student pastor, recounted his drive to church earlier that morning. "The day was beautiful. I realized that God, He did it. We're here and my heart was overflowing with love to my God for His faithfulness to us," he said.

Pastor Larry Corder spoke on the assurance we have in times of trouble. "We don't always know what God's doing, as Christians, as a church, until we look back and see what God did." He, along with his

church members, believe this journey has been truly transformative for the church and has shown them how much God has done for them.

An official building dedication service will be observed on the third anniversary of the tornado — which happens to be a Sunday — April 27 at 10 a.m.

Alberta brings the total of Alabama Baptist churches rebuilt after being destroyed by the April 27, 2011, tornadoes to 14. Only one church is left to be rebuilt, Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Centre. The drawing plans are in their final phase and the church hopes to begin rebuilding later this year. (Bethany Rogers)

UMobile dedicates new recording studio

The University of Mobile dedicated its new Fisher-Brewer Recording Studio on Feb. 27 at a ceremony held in Martin Hall. The studio is a key component of the university's record label, 8Eighty Records, and its Center for Performing Arts/School of Music and School of Worship Leadership. The studio is equipped with ProTools 11 with Avid HD interfaces, industry-standard microphones, pre-amps and compressors. (UMobile)

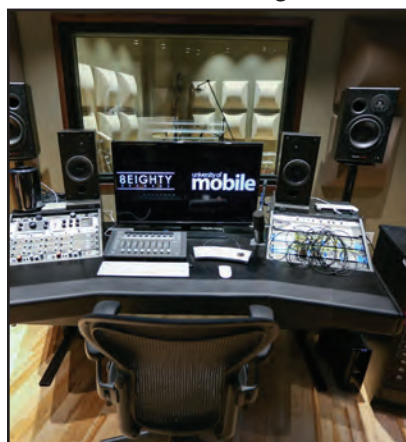


Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

Possible arson attack on Philadelphia Baptist

A fire engulfed parts of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Peterman, in Bethlehem Baptist Association on Feb. 25.

Chairman of the deacons and church treasurer Gene Ramer said there were four different origins of fire with the largest portion located in the fellowship hall.

Ramer said someone put in a 911 call at 6:24 a.m. and by 6:30 a.m., volunteer firefighters were heading to the church.

The main fire burned through the wall and up into the attic, busting a waterline, Ramer said. The water then flooded the room, which actually put most of the fire out before

firefighters even arrived. Once they arrived they were able to extinguish the flames.



Photo courtesy of John Marks Sr.

The fire appeared to be an act of arson, Ramer said. Someone kicked in the back door of the building and used literature, including Bibles and Sunday School curriculum, to create the main fire.

Church members met for prayer in the sanctuary Feb. 26 and will be able to utilize it for other gatherings in the future, Ramer said. "We're just praising the Lord it wasn't any worse and no one got hurt," he said. (TAB)

'STICK with the task'

State Evangelism Conference encourages, challenges, ministers to participants, online viewers

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Many of you ... are carrying a burden," said Sammy Gilbreath as he addressed the audience during the opening night of the State Evangelism Conference.

"I pray that today and tomorrow you'll let loose and let God touch your life," added Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The conference was held Feb. 24-25 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, and also was streamed online, garnering more than 400 online viewers. The event offered the opportunity for participants to be encouraged, challenged and ministered to through a dynamic group of speakers and musicians, several of whom called attention to the pressing need for revival both in Alabama and the nation.

Headlining the opening night session was Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., and former pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church.

Gaines said he believes the difference between the church in the Book of Acts and today is prayer life. "We don't pray like they pray," he said, noting the concept of fervent prayer.

So what happens when people pray fervently?

First God provides His peace, Gaines said, noting the example of Peter in Acts 12 sleeping in prison despite being bound with chains. Even though he was facing certain execution unless God intervened, Peter was experiencing perfect peace because of the church's fervent prayer for him, Gaines noted.

Second God activates angels, Gaines said, noting both the angel sent to Peter and the angel sent to shut the lion's mouth while Daniel was in the lion's den.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Steve Gaines (center), pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., prays at the close of the Feb. 24 session of the State Evangelism Conference. With him are Rick Lance (left), SBOM executive director, and Sammy Gilbreath, director of SBOM's office of evangelism.

"One angel can do a lot of good. Maybe angels aren't being activated because we're not praying," Gaines noted.

Third God surprises His servants. Gaines pointed to when Peter, after his prison escape, suddenly appeared to people who were gathered to pray for him. "When they opened the door, they were amazed," Gaines said.

Lastly God engages His enemies, Gaines noted, providing the example in Acts 12 when King Herod did not give praise to God and was eaten by worms until he died.

"You don't need to be talking for God if you're not talking to God," Gaines concluded.

Another important aspect in the life of a believer is the concept of "stickability," said Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Futral referenced the end of John 6 where many disciples leave Jesus and He asks the Twelve if they also are going to quit.

"If you don't have stickability, it doesn't matter what you do have — it won't make any difference," Futral said.

Pitman father, sons preach together for first time in US

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

The Pitman preachers — Bob, Brett and Vance — are familiar names in Alabama Baptist life, and individually their work extends nationally.

But the recent Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference gave them an opportunity to be seen as a package deal.

It was the first time for them to preach together at the same conference, at least in the United States. They have previously spoken together in South Africa on four different occasions.

Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said Bob Pitman has "long been a favorite" at the evangelism conference and was already on his list of speakers to invite when he started planning the 2014 conference. He also was in search of a successful church planter and a successful young pastor to round out the conference lineup.

Vance Pitman came to mind for the church planter role. He serves as pastor of Hope Church, Las Vegas, Nev., which he planted in 2001. Gilbreath said he has visited Hope Church and has witnessed firsthand what a

wonderful job Vance Pitman is doing as a church planter.

He also has kept up with Brett Pitman, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, because of that church's incredible growth, so Brett Pitman surfaced quickly as an option for the successful young pastor slot.

"There they were — all in the same family," Gilbreath recalled. "I contacted each and told them of my idea to have all three on the same program, and they agreed.

"I have never had three family members, and I am not sure I have

ever heard of this, so what a wonderful example of faithfulness and service to our Lord," Gilbreath said.

Brett Pitman noted that his father and brother are two of his spiritual heroes and he was "incredibly humbled" for the opportunity to speak at the same event as them.

Vance Pitman echoed his brother's sentiments, noting he was truly honored to be speaking in his home state with both his father and brother. "Not very many people ever get the opportunity to do that," he said.

"We pray for each other regularly, talk often and always use each other as a source of counsel," Vance Pitman added.

Brett Pitman agreed, noting he believes that he, his brother and father have always served as a source of counsel and encouragement for one another.

50 years of preaching ministry

Bob Pitman was called to preach during a revival service when he was just 16 years old and is celebrating 50 years of preaching ministry this year.

As a student at Samford University in Birmingham, he served Fourth Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham, as minister of music and Roebuck Park Baptist Church (now NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville) as minister of youth. He went on to serve in other church positions before accepting his first pastorate at Wall Highway Baptist Church, Madison. He later became pastor of First Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, for 11 years and Kirby Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., for 20 years. For the past six years, he

has served in full-time evangelism.

"I never attempted to call my sons into the ministry," Bob Pitman noted. "I believe that is God's work and only God's work. However, it blessed me beyond measure that God would call both of them to preach."

In what Brett Pitman calls a strange turn of events, he now serves as his father's pastor at Highland Park Baptist and said his father has been a "huge influence" on his life.

"For the first 18 years of my life, he was both my dad and my pastor," he said. "Seven years later, I had the opportunity to serve on the staff of Kirby Woods (Baptist) ... under his leadership. I would say the greatest mark he left in my life was the fact that he was the same person in the pulpit and out of the pulpit. His practice truly aligned with his preaching."

Vance Pitman agreed. "Many have heard the horror stories about preachers' kids. I think the reason there are so many messed up preachers' kids is because there are a lot of messed up preachers," he said. "Many pastors live one way at church and another way at home. This leads many pastors' children to walk away from the faith seeing the hypocrisy of a double life. My dad was not perfect, but he was the same imperfect follower of Jesus at home and at church. That consistency revealed an authenticity about the gospel that impacted my life."

Bob Pitman and his sons all spoke during the conference's morning session Feb. 25, delivering messages that both challenged and encouraged the audience (*see story, pages 6 and 7*). ☞



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Bob Pitman (center) and his sons, Vance Pitman (left) and Brett Pitman, all spoke during the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference during the morning session Feb. 25.

State Evangelism Conference

There are three things people need to do to have stickability, he noted. First check your credentials. "I'm talking about that simple, overwhelming ... moment when Jesus touched your life and said, 'I want to use you,'" Futral said.

Then cling to the essentials, he added, referencing John 6:63 when Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you — they are full of the Spirit and life."

"It's so easy for us to get off the essentials. ... Just do what Jesus told you to do," Futral encouraged.

And don't forget to celebrate the potential of saying yes to Jesus and letting Him work in us, Futral noted. "Don't give up. You stick with the task — don't let go," he said.

But the instant you decide you want your church and your life to make a difference, be prepared because the enemy will attack, said Brett Pitman, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals.

Pitman told the audience that "you can do everything right and still suffer difficulty." Job was a man of good character and reputation and great wealth but in one day he lost everything in his life, Pitman said.

In the midst of suffering, remember that God has not forsaken you, Pitman said, noting that Job 42:12 says the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning.

Compared to glory that awaits us, every bit of suffering in life is temporary because of the glory that is to come, Pitman noted.

In addition, all suffering provides an opportunity for God to be glorified, Pitman said, offering the audience some personal implications of how to deal with suffering.

First allow weeping to lead you to worship, he said. "When you are stripped bare ... beaten down ... and yet in the midst of that through (a) broken heart you're able to stand and worship the one true holy God ... it will be the most glorious worship you will ever experience," Pitman said.

Second suffer difficulty without sinning. "Oftentimes in our lives suffering is the doorway to greater sin," he explained.

Third look to the One who loves you supremely. "In the midst of suffering get your eyes off the storm and ... on Jesus," Pitman noted. "When you're wondering if you're going to make it, look to Jesus. Because He has overcome the world."

'Bear fruit'

It's when the Father sees His Son Jesus that He is most pleased in us, said Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church, Las Vegas, Nev.

Six times in John 15:1-8 Jesus uses the phrase "bear fruit," Vance Pitman said, noting four clues Jesus gives about what fruit is: fruit is the defining mark of a believer, it is a lifestyle characteristic, it is evident in varying degrees and it is that in the believer which glorifies the Father.

Fruit is "the life of Jesus in me being lived through me," Pitman said. "Through my union with Christ, I'm being changed on the inside. This change that's happening on the inside comes out of my life on the outside."

And while Jesus used the phrase "bear fruit" six times, not once is it an imperative, Vance Pitman said. "He never commanded you and me to bear fruit. You know why? We can't ... we're just a branch."

Bearing fruit is not the focus of the life of a believer, he added. "The only thing the branch can do is hang on to the vine for all it's worth, because the life is in the vine."

To read summaries of the sermons by other preachers — evangelist Bob Pitman; Alan Floyd, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile; and Georgia pastor Frank Cox — visit www.thealabamabaptist.org. ❧



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Guy Penrod, former Gaither member, sings during the evening finale event of the State Evangelism Conference on Feb. 25, sharing songs such as 'The Old Rugged Cross,' 'He's Watching Me,' 'Nothing But the Blood' and 'He Hideth My Soul.'

'It's not about the how many but the 'who' many,' Cymbala says

(continued from page 1)

Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" Acts 1:8 — demonstrated what was heaviest on His heart, Cymbala said. "He didn't talk about trivial things."

He did not command for believers to sing praise choruses instead of hymns or vice versa, Cymbala said.

"He didn't even say to study the Bible, even though we need to. ... He said the most important thing is to go throughout the world and spread the Good News 'that I'm alive.'"

"We live in America and the Christian church is shrinking in America faster than you can imagine," Cymbala noted. "It is what it is. We live in a dark world. America is a Gentile nation. It is all around us."

"The hope is not in the White House, the president, Republicans or Democrats," he said. "The only hope is in the Good News of Jesus Christ."

"A nation can't be better ... than the people who live in it. Unless we change the people, we can't change anything," Cymbala said. "And the only instrument to change people is the gospel of Jesus Christ. ... There has to be an act of God."

But reaching people with the gospel is not about church growth because focusing on church growth can lead to a dilution of the gospel, he explained. "We've got people in evangelical churches not living any differently than people in the world. There's no difference and the root of that is the cursed pride we get in us about who is running how many."

"It's not about the how many but the 'who' many," he said, noting the quality of the believers' lives is more important than the quantity of people in the pews. "The only way people are going to be converted is if we preach the gospel."

But Cymbala cautioned Alabama Baptists to not assume they know the gospel. Start by studying every sermon in the Book of Acts where evangelism is accomplished and notice what was preached there and what has been added in sermons today, he said.

"There's no join-the-church gospel, no joint-denomination gospel, no black gospel, no white southern gospel," Cymbala said. "We've added all this junk and it has diluted the true

message of 'For God so loved the world ...' (John 3:16).

"We are not preaching the same thing Paul and Peter preached. We are preaching what we have accumulated growing up. If I preach what they preach, then I will see the same results they do."

Learning how to grow

Pointing out that many Christians end up glorifying the beliefs they developed as they grew up in church, Cymbala asked, "If you make that the standard, how are you going to grow?"

Psalm 119 says, "Teach me, show," he said, but "most of us read the Bible looking for ammunition for what we already believe."

"We are not supposed to be fighting culture wars," he said. "There is no improvement on what Jesus gave the disciples to do."

And there is no improvement on the power of the Holy Spirit, he explained.

"The Word talks a lot about the Holy Spirit," Cymbala said. "I'm not talking about emotionalism or fanaticism, but ... how is our light going to shine unless the Holy Spirit is beaming us up?"

"The only thing God can do on earth

now is through the Holy Spirit. We need the Spirit," he said, noting the disciples were not really changed until Jesus left and the Spirit came.

And while the power of the Holy Spirit and the presentation of a pure gospel are vital, they are not enough without a true love of people, he concluded.

"We can't effectively witness unless we love the people we talk to," he said. "I can't effectively witness if I'm not filled with the same love that sent Jesus to the cross."

"Jesus died for everyone. How can I reject anyone that Christ died for?"

Cymbala said the depth of God's love came sharply into focus for him when the horrible stench of a homeless man standing before him during an invitation service turned his heart to assume he wanted money.

"I don't want your money," the man said as he slapped Cymbala's hand away. "I want this Jesus you talked about."

"Today he is one of the finest Christians I know, and I was going to dismiss him with a \$5 bill," Cymbala said. "God spoke to me that day — 'If you don't love this smell, then I can't use you. You are disqualified because the whole world smells like this to Me.'" ❧

Gaines shares how 'prayer is our lifeline'

Former Alabama Baptist Donna Gaines, who recently wrote "Leaving Ordinary: Encounter God Through Extraordinary Prayer," shares about her path of learning that "prayer is our lifeline." She and her husband, Steve, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., and former pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church, were guest speakers for a fellowship dinner and Q&A

time at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, Feb. 24. Around 200 people attended the Alabama Baptist State Board



GAINES

of Missions-sponsored event prior to the opening session of the State Evangelism Conference.

Donna Gaines used the example of the tabernacle (altar, lampstands, etc.) as a guide to teach readers how to interact with God and grow in true intimacy with Him.

"The only way I can know the path God has for me is to spend time with Him in that quiet place," she told those in attendance, who all received a copy of the book. (Neisha Fuson)

'God was FAITHFULLY there'

Governor's wife shares about letting God have control

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

It was a path she was unsure of in her heart but when Dianne Bentley's husband felt called to run for governor of Alabama, all she could do was let God have control.

Bentley, a longtime member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, shared about her role as First Lady for the past four years with 102 participants at the Ministers' Wives Luncheon on Feb. 25.

The event, sponsored by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, was held during the State Evangelism Conference at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Reflecting back to their life in Tuscaloosa prior to Gov. Robert Bentley's election in 2009, Dianne Bentley said, "When I had control, I knew the way. My routine centered around my wonderful family and my relationship with the Lord. I thought I was leading a pretty good life."

The campaign season was not always easy, she confessed, but "God was faithfully there ... and God was in control. He sent me Scriptures and provided support."

On Jan. 17, 2011, Bentley's husband was inaugurated and the next day he went to work, she said. That left her at a new house called the Governor's Mansion and in a new role. All along the way God has continually opened doors, she said, mentioning opportunities to



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Prayer for First Lady Dianne Bentley (seated) was given at the end of the luncheon. Pictured here are (l to r) Mary Sue Bennett, Pam Lance, Candace McIntosh and Laurelle Stoudenmire.

advocate for literacy, victims of domestic violence and adoption/foster care.

She also noted how she helped create The First Lady Dianne Bentley Mansion Preservation Act, enacted in 2011, to help preserve the mansion's contents and keep it "in proper historical condition."

One of the hardest moments in the Bentleys' time as governor and first lady was April 27, 2011, she noted.

"Tornadoes ravaged our state destroying homes, towns and lives," Bentley said. "It was both a high and low experience for us.

It was a low to see the destruction across the state but a high to see the wonderful people of Alabama who banned together and supported one another."

And although she works daily for the people of Alabama, she said, "I still have to take care of my husband."

In day-to-day life Bentley tries to be her husband's protector of health and time, serve as his traveling companion and partner with him on their "spiritual journey."

"My most important agenda of the day is to pray for my husband," she said. "We are only here because God wanted us for such a time as this. I pray for (my husband's) health ... protection ... and for wisdom and discernment." ❧



BENTLEY

Evangelists' officers elected

The Alabama Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (ACOSBE) met during the Feb. 24-25 Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference in Montgomery to elect new officers for the group of vocational evangelists in the state.

New ACOSBE officers are (l to r): Herman Pair, of Oneonta, vice president; Bo Shedd, of Cullman, president; and Darlene Berry, of Huntsville, treasurer. (TAB)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Joyful noise



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Voices of Mobile perform during the Feb. 24 evening session and Feb. 25 morning session of the State Evangelism Conference. Voices is directed by Roger Breland.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Kenneth McWilliams, minister of music and administration for Enon Baptist Church, Morris, leads State Evangelism Conference participants in worship at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Frank Jones accompanies Kenneth McWilliams in leading worship at the State Evangelism Conference. Jones also played pre-session music throughout the Feb. 24-25 event.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Music evangelist Bob Smith, of Huntsville, sings special music during the Feb. 25 afternoon session of the State Evangelism Conference.

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries



news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (800) 264-1225 | www.alsbom.org

Ministry and Reconciliation Opportunities

Let me thank all Alabama Baptists who in some way observed Disaster Relief Preparedness Month in February. The churches of the Alabama Baptist State Convention are among the most faithful in the SBC when it comes to providing resources and trained personnel during the aftermath of catastrophic weather, and I pray we will always be faithful in this regard, ministering to others in the name of Christ.

Please remember the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Offering. There's still time to participate in this effort which allows us to have equipment and resources ready to deploy in the wake of future disasters. Fully 100 percent of contributions received are used for this purpose with none used for administrative costs.

Thanks to the faithfulness of Alabama Baptists – both through

Thanks to the faithfulness of Alabama Baptists – both through Disaster Relief giving and through the Cooperative Program – we stand ready and with more effectiveness for such ministry opportunities in the future.

Disaster Relief giving and through the Cooperative Program – we stand ready and with more effectiveness for such ministry opportunities in the future.

For more information about Disaster Relief among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Mel Johnson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 389, or (334) 613-2389.

New Name, Continuing Purpose

For many decades, your State Board of Missions has been an agent of change and reconciliation regarding relationships between Baptists in our state convention and other Baptist organizations in our state. Each year, a key event,

formerly known as the Human Relations Conference, has been an annual opportunity to have fellowship with a variety of Baptists throughout our state.

This year's event, renamed as the Racial Reconciliation Conference, will feature several key leaders among Baptists in our state including Kyuwon Kim, Korean church planter, Tuscaloosa Baptist Association; Desmond Frick, director of Highway Ministry in Opelika, who grew up in South Africa during times of apartheid; James Hadaway, an Indian chief from Southeast Alabama; Dukinson Merilin, a Haitian pastor and church planter now living in Albertville; and State Missionaries Ronald Davis and Lamar Duke from our Office of Associational Missions & Church Planting.

The conference will be held at Shocco Springs Conference Center, April 25-26, with the theme of "Celebrating Racial Reconciliation in Preaching the Gospel." It begins with lunch at noon on Friday and concludes with



lunch on Saturday.

To register, please call 1-800-280-1105.

For other information, please contact Ronald Davis at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 270, or (334) 613-2270.

Isaiah 43:10

By Rick Lance
State Missionary
Executive Director



FOCUS on One Mission



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions



Sharing Christ in Crisis



Save the Date!
April 4-5, 2014
State Disaster Relief Training
Shocco Springs



www.SBDR.org. Your connection to Disaster Relief:
• Cleanup/ Recovery/ Chainsaw • Communications
• Administration • Chaplaincy
• Mass Feeding • Shower Deployment • Unit Leadership (Blue Cap Training)

Personnel eligible for Blue Cap training must have extensive field experience and be endorsed by the local association.



Disaster Relief training is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



The Cooperative Program plan for giving has been near to my heart for many years. I have always believed that we can do more together than apart. The Cooperative Program has always been just that in the Baptist churches I have served.

Whether it was disaster relief, international missions, North American missions or even local missions projects, the concrete effort of local churches coming together through the Cooperative Program to meet needs has always prevailed.

On a personal note, God has provided me many opportunities to be on the receiving end of the Cooperative Program through theological education. I could not be as prepared as a minister today if it weren't for the dollars given by individual churches to Baptist universities and seminaries through the Cooperative Program. Both my wife and I have been recipients of quality



theological education made possible by the CP. We are eternally grateful. — **Bobby Burt**, pastor, University Baptist Church, Huntsville (Madison Association)

When an Alabama Baptist Christian gives through the Cooperative Program, that believer is carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth, supporting church planters in American cities with little Gospel witness, caring for widows and orphans, providing assistance to local churches, training ministers and missionaries, and providing a Christian education for the leaders of the next generation. While I am thankful for all efforts to give to missions, giving through the Cooperative Program is the most efficient and effective way to fulfill Christ's Great Commission by giving. — **John Killian**, pastor, Maytown Baptist Church (Bessemer Association), and president, Alabama Baptist State Convention



One Voice: Alabama Baptist All-State Youth Choir Tour

April 25-27, 2014

OneVoice is a group of auditioned singers and instrumentalists who are in grades 9-12 and who actively participate in their local church youth music ministry. This year's tour will be in the Talladega and Oneonta areas to include a concert at First Baptist Church, Oneonta. Lodging will be at Shocco Springs. Cost of the tour will be \$200 and includes lodging, meals, local transportation, music and shirt. Students must provide their own transportation to Shocco Springs (Friday) and home from First Baptist Oneonta (Sunday).



- Vocal or tonal quality
- Musical interpretation

Also you must submit a letter of recommendation from your minister of music or pastor and a brief statement concerning your walk with Christ.

Complete the application form online at alsbom.org/onevoice. Deadline for returning the application information and audition CD is March

11, 2014. You will be notified of selection by March 21, 2014. Those who were members of the Alabama Baptist Children's Honor Choir, NewSong or OneVoice are automatically selected. No audition CD is necessary, but an application is still required!

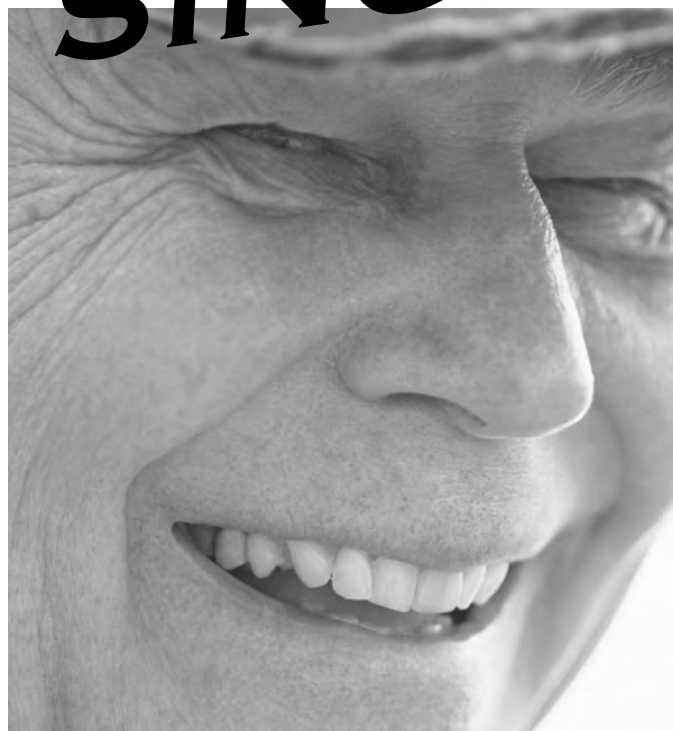
Audition Requirements:

Submit a CD of an unaccompanied vocal or instrumental selection (a hymn or praise song) of your choice that will demonstrate your ability in the following areas:

- Pitch memory
- Vocal or instrumental range

For more information, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

SENIOR ADULT, SINGIN'



FOUR LOCATIONS IN 2014!

- ~ Tuesday, **MARCH 18**: Cottage Hill Baptist Church, 4255 Cottage Hill Rd., Mobile
- ~ Thursday, **MARCH 20**: Liberty Park Baptist Church, 12001 Liberty Pky, Vestavia Hills
- ~ Tuesday, **SEPTEMBER 16**: First Baptist Church, 830 U.S. Highway 43, Winfield
- ~ Thursday, **SEPTEMBER 18**: Southside Baptist Church, 423 East Cottonwood Road, Dothan

Gas up the church van, and be ready to hit the road! Come to one of the locations above, and let's make some joyful noise. Pianist Frank Jones will be there to lead us as we sing hymns and worship the Lord together. The singin' begins at 10 a.m. and ends with lunch. The cost is \$10 per person, and that includes lunch!

REGISTER ONLINE:

www.alsbom.org/senioradultsingin

For other information, contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org. You may also visit www.alsbom.org/ssd for updates as they become available.

ON MISSION: The Great Commission Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

LEADERconnect FORUM

PREACHING WITH STORYTELLING

Register online at alsbom.org/leaderconnectforum

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2014
9 A.M.-4 P.M.
 REGISTRATION 8:30-9 A.M.



BAPTIST BUILDING, 2001 E. SOUTH BLVD., MONTGOMERY

PRICE: \$30 PER PERSON, INCLUDES LUNCH.



~~~~~ For more information, please contact State Missionary **mike jackson** at **1-800-264-1225, ext. 210, or (334) 613-2210, [mjackson@alsbom.org](mailto:mjackson@alsbom.org)**

■ Preaching with Storytelling will give guidelines on how to use storytelling in preaching. The emphasis will be twofold: telling and preaching Bible stories, and telling stories to illustrate Bible truths. Jesus often told stories when He spoke. Preachers who are faithful to the Carpenter's message need to be faithful to imitate the Carpenter's storytelling approach.

■ Jack Day will lead the training. Jack was a pioneer in using chronological Bible storytelling in Brazil when he served for 33 years as an IMB missionary. Jack was the Eastern South American Bible Storytelling Trainer. Jack always searched for stories with life-lessons that illustrate biblical teaching.

■ Jack returned to the U.S. to expand his storytelling activities. He does storytelling, leads training seminars and does consulting on storytelling across North America and internationally.

## Alabama Campers Mission Fall Rally

**Wednesday through Saturday, April 30 - May 3, 2014**

**National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds, Dothan**

Campers on Mission (COM) is a national fellowship of Christian campers who share their faith while they camp. Though sponsored by Southern Baptists, membership is open to Christian campers of all denominations.

The Alabama Chapter of COM sponsors fall and spring rallies and more than 20 mission projects per year. Visitors who are interested in possible membership are welcome to attend the rally. Friday night at 6:30 p.m. is a time of project reports and would be an ideal time to visit.

Campers on Mission projects include state fairs, motor speedways, sewing, nursing home ministry, puppets, prayer walks, Seaman Center, association camps and disaster relief, but mostly construction of churches, ministry camps and church additions.

Any adult may join Campers on Mission: single or family, young or older. COM is family-friendly and provides a great way to experience the relaxation of vacation with the satisfaction of a mission project. It is a great pathway to become an on-mission family.

**Enrollment Form and Other Info:**  
[www.alabamacom.org](http://www.alabamacom.org)

For more information, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, [sstephens@alsbom.org](mailto:sstephens@alsbom.org).



# Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

Monday, May 5, 2014  
9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Lakeside Baptist Church  
2865 Old Rocky Ridge Rd.,  
Birmingham

**Music:** SQUIRE PARSONS

**Speakers:** Harper Shannon,  
Jay Wolf, Ray Newcomb

**FREE ADMISSION**

No registration necessary

*For more information, please contact  
Ministry Assistant Pam Davis at  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 245, or  
(334) 613-2245, pdavis@alsbom.org.*



Squire  
Parsons



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

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



# GET ACQUAINTED DAY

**At the Baptist  
Building, 2001 E.  
South Blvd. in  
Montgomery**

**Tuesday, May 6,  
10 am - 3:30 pm  
9:30 - 10 - Check-in and  
refreshments**

- Meet your state missionaries
- Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission
- Tour the Baptist Building
- Spouses welcome
- Lunch provided

**Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a Get Acquainted Day.**

**Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or (334) 613-2231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to [www.alsbom.org/gad](http://www.alsbom.org/gad).**

**FOCUS on One Mission**



# ROYAL AMBASSADOR CONGRESS

**FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, MARCH 21-22**

**CAMP HOBBS, 2109 COUNTY ROAD 59, PRATTVILLE**

**FOR GRADES 1-12 ROYAL AMBASSADORS, LEADERS AND FAMILY**

≈ **MISSIONARY REPRESENTATIVES: "HIKING FOR MISSIONS & THE NEHEMIAH PROJECT"**

≈ **PINEWOOD DERBY FINALS: OPEN RACE FOR ALL RA PINEWOOD DERBY CARS AND STATE RACE FOR ASSOCIATION RA PINEWOOD DERBY WINNERS**

≈ **20+ FIELD EVENTS: ARCHERY, AIR RIFLES, TOMAHAWK THROWING, FOOT RACES, CLIMBING WALL, SLINGSHOT, BLOW DARTS, BASEBALL THROW AND LOTS OF OTHER OUTDOOR "BOY" ACTIVITIES.**

≈ **FELLOWSHIPING WITH YOUR RA FRIENDS: AROUND THE CAMP FIRE, TENT CAMPING, AT A MOTEL NEARBY AND WHILE TRAVELING**

**ONLINE INFO: WWW.ALSBOM.ORG/RACONGRESS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT STATE MISSIONARY STEVE STEPHENS AT 1-800-264-1225, EXT. 268, OR (334) 613-2268, SSTEPHENS@ALSBOM.ORG.**

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

## WORSHIP & LEADERSHIP CHURCH MUSIC EVENTS

### Children's Choir Summit Leadership Conference

"Next Best" Deadline: May 1  
July 11-12 at Shocco Springs  
\$100 per person (based on 3 or more/room)  
For children's choir leaders and anyone who works with children

CHECK WEBSITE FOR MORE INFO AND TO REGISTER ONLINE:  
[www.alsbom.org/children-summit](http://www.alsbom.org/children-summit)

### MIX MusiCamp at Shocco

"Next Best" Deadline: May 1  
July 14-18 at Shocco Springs  
\$280 per person  
For grades 3-5, 6-7, 8-10

Jump into the mix. Unforgettable worship. Lifelong friendships. Aqua jump. Paintball. Uncontrollable fun.

REGISTRATION: [mixmusiccamp.org](http://mixmusiccamp.org)

For more information, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, [khibbs@alsbom.org](mailto:khibbs@alsbom.org) or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, [scleveland@alsbom.org](mailto:scleveland@alsbom.org).



**SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT**  
MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY,  
APRIL 14-16, SHOCCO SPRINGS

### DECLARE!

*One generation will declare Your works to the next and will proclaim Your mighty acts. Psalm 145:4 (HCSB)*

**PREACHER:** Don Downs, Pastor, West End Baptist Church, Valley

**CELEBRATION LEADER:** Andrew Smith, Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery

**MUSIC LEADER:** Justin Belew, Phenix City

Senior adults will come together at Shocco Springs for this time of praise, worship, fellowship and spiritual growth. We will leave refreshed and ready to go back to our families, churches and communities to declare God's mighty works to the next generation.

Begin making your plans now to attend this time of camaraderie and fun. The retreat will begin with lunch on Monday, April 14, and end with lunch on Wednesday, April 16.

**REGISTRATION:** 1-800-280-1105. (Cost per person is based upon choice of lodging.)

*For other information, contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, [emitchell@alsbom.org](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org). You may also visit [www.alsbom.org/senioradultretreat](http://www.alsbom.org/senioradultretreat) for updates as they become available.*

# ALABAMA BAPTIST BOYS CAMPS: DATES & COST



A camp experience where boys participate in uniquely “boy” activities.

**Southeast Alabama - Vineyard Christian Retreat Center, Ariton (near Ozark)**  
 • June 23-26, 4th-12th grade boys camp, \$150

• June 26-28, 1st-6th grade boy & Dad or Mom, \$160

**Northeast Alabama - Marshall Baptist Retreat Center, Guntersville**

• July 7-10, 4th-12th grade boys camp, \$150

• July 10-12, 1st-6th grade boy & Dad camp, \$130/pair

**Northwest Alabama - Earl Trent Assembly Baptist Camp, Florence**

• July 14-17, 3rd-12th grade boys camp, \$70-\$80

• July 17-19, 1st-6th grade boy & Dad camp, \$140/pair

**Central Alabama - WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs**

• July 28-31, 4th-12th grade boys camp, \$150

• July 31-Aug. 2, 1st-6th grade boy & Dad or Mom camp, \$160/pair

A boy does not have to be in Royal Ambassadors to attend. One or two boys, where they are the only boys in the church, will feel comfortable at the camp. Chaperones are welcome but not required.

All camps include missions education, spiritual growth through twice-a-day “boy interest” Bible study and outdoor chapel, opportunity for decisions, respect and relationship building, and camp activities (archery, air rifles, tomahawk throwing, blow

darts, canoeing, cooking on a campfire and a buddy burner, swimming, adventure recreation, compass and ropecraft skills, and nature study).

— **4th-12th Grade Boys Camp:**

Those completing the third grade are eligible.

— **1st-6th Grade Boy & Dad/Man:**

For boys going into grades 1-6 and their dads or a significant male adult. Dad participates in all activities with his son. (Special Bible studies in 2014 will be dads sharing life experiences with sons.)

— **1st-6th Grade Boy & Mom**

**Camp:** For boys going into grades 1-6 and their moms. Mom participates in all activities with her son.

For more information and to register online visit [alsbom.org/boyscamp](http://alsbom.org/boyscamp).

For more information, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, [sstephens@alsbom.org](mailto:sstephens@alsbom.org).

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**The Stables at Russell Crossroads, Alexander City, Ala.**

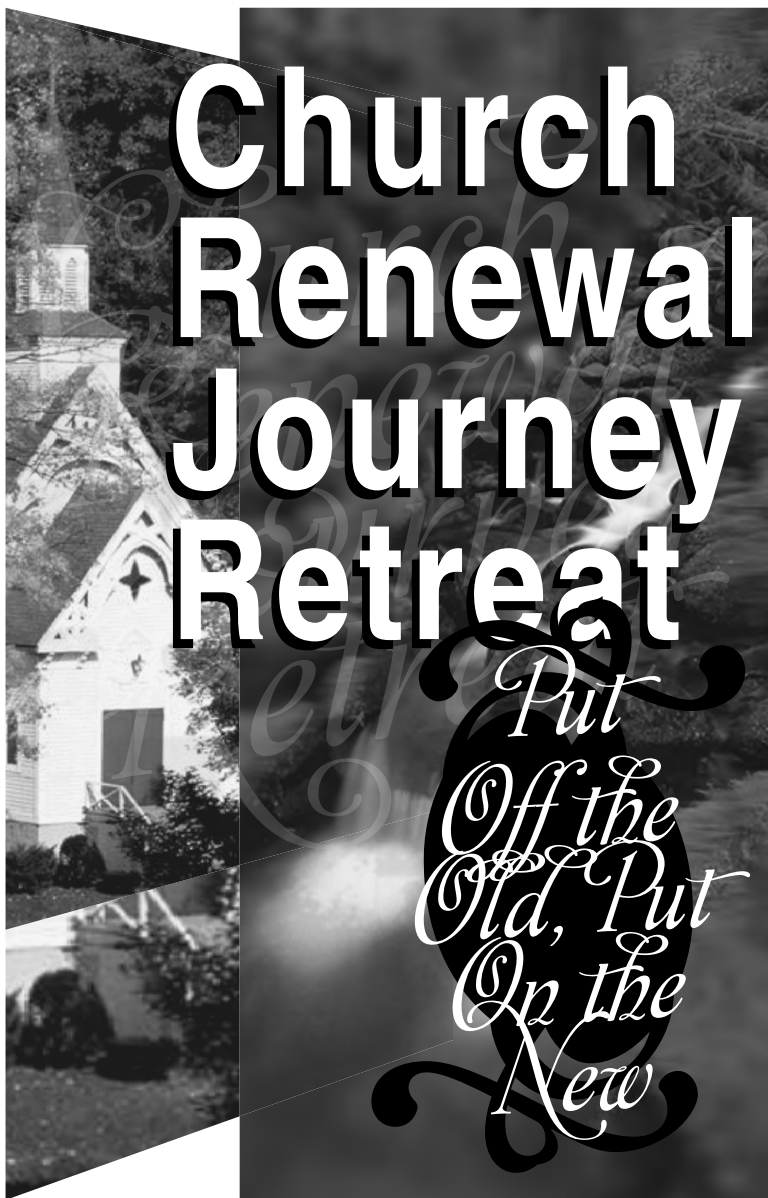
**COST: \$25, INCLUDING LUNCH**

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED • Toll-free:** 1-800-264-1225 ext. 258

▪ **Direct:** 334-613-2258 • Email: [anelson@alsbom.org](mailto:anelson@alsbom.org) • **MORE INFO:**

[www.alsbom.org/trailride](http://www.alsbom.org/trailride) (Coggins test required by state law. Please - no stallions.)

**FOCUS on One Mission**



**Friday and Saturday, May 16-17, 2014**  
Shocco Springs

**Inspirational Challenge:** WADE WALLACE, pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville

JOHN FRANKLIN, formerly with LifeWay, will be sharing with us on the subject of prayer. Worship leaders for the weekend will be Shirley Berry from Mississippi and Jane Brown from Mobile. Bob and Phyllis Foy, Church Renewal Journey national coordinators with the North American Mission Board, will be sharing updates of the CRJ Ministry nationally. They will also share new ways in accessing the crjmessageboard.com website. This will include the accessing of other team members from other states, how team members may serve in other states and receiving prayer requests from team members from other states.

**Cost:** \$79.50 per person (double occupancy) or \$99.50 per person (single occupancy, private room). Cost includes one night's lodging and three meals.

Check-in/registration: 3 p.m. Friday

**To Register:** 1-800-280-1105

For other information, please contact Tommy Puckett at: [tpuckett@elmore.rr.com](mailto:tpuckett@elmore.rr.com) or (334) 224-2082

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THIS CONFERENCE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY GIFTS FROM ALABAMA BAPTISTS THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM.

**FOCUS on One Mission**

# FAITH-FOCUSED SECURITY TRAINING

## LEVEL A TRAINING FOR 2014

This is the most basic training for the missions volunteer who travels occasionally to low-risk areas on mission trips. Participants will receive a full day of instruction led by Sentinel Trainers certified by Fort Sherman Academy covering topics like travel security, code of conduct, crime survival and basic crisis policy all from a faith-based perspective.

- **March 22:** Elkdale Baptist Church, Selma
- **April 5:** First Baptist Church, Opelika
- **April 26:** First Baptist Church, Jasper
- **May 24:** First Baptist Church, Winfield

**COST** is \$40 per attendee (includes lunch and breaks). Reservations are non-refundable.

## LEVEL B TRAINING FOR 2014

Four sessions of classroom instruction led by a recognized leader in faith-based training for missions organizations. This level is designed for pastors, ministers of missions, church staff, mission team leaders and other mission leaders who travel or lead mission teams to elevated risk locations. Sessions will cover security, code of conduct, crime survival, dealing with unfriendly governments, detention and questioning. Role play will be used.

- **May 29-31:** Westmeade Baptist Church, Decatur

**COST** is \$200 per attendee (includes materials, Saturday lunch and breaks). Reservations are non-refundable.

**REGISTER ONLINE** [www.alsbom.org/ffst](http://www.alsbom.org/ffst)

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sheron Poole at 1-800-264-1225 ext. 298, (334) 613-2298, [spoole@alsbom.org](mailto:spoole@alsbom.org).



Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

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



GLOBALMISSIONS

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

# INTERESTED IN BEING AN ALABAMA BAPTIST BOYS CAMP COUNSELOR?

## Characteristics and qualifications of a camp counselor:

- Male
- Spiritual maturity
- Love for the outdoors
- Mission-minded
- Desire to work with boys in grades 4-6 or 7-12

**Training:** Everything you need to know about campcraft, the ropes course and camp activities will be taught in pre-camp orientation, July 19-22, 2014.

**Pay:** Besides eternal rewards, you will earn between \$200 and \$400 per week. In addition, all meals and lodging costs will be covered.

**Online Information:** "Camp Counselor Application" at [www.alsbom.org/boyscamp](http://www.alsbom.org/boyscamp)

For more information, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, [sstephens@alsbom.org](mailto:ssstephens@alsbom.org).



# ACCELERATE

[ PARENTING TEENAGERS TOWARD ADULTHOOD ]



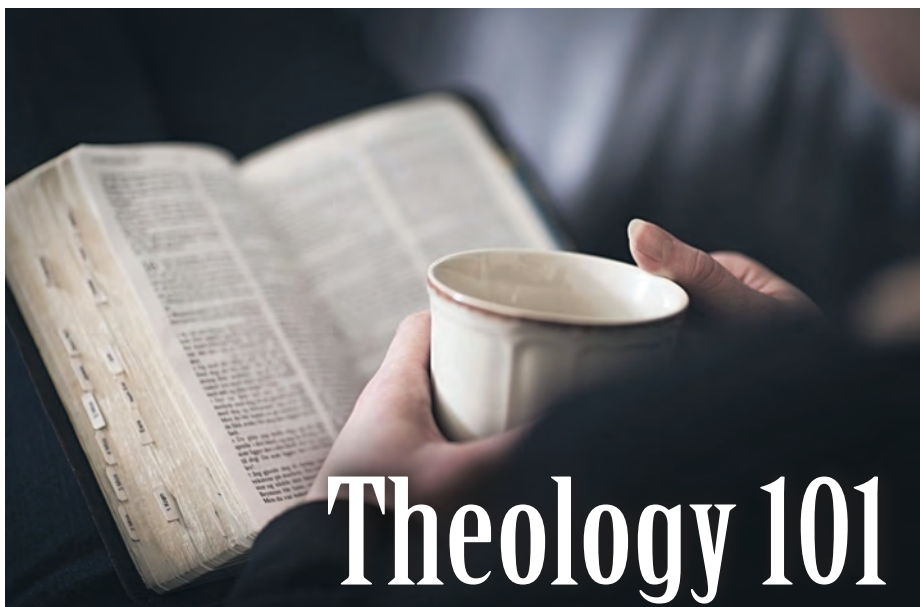
Thursday, May 1, 2014, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

BAPTIST BUILDING, 2001 E. SOUTH BLVD., MONTGOMERY

RICHARD ROSS, professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, writes, "The majority of people between the ages of 18 and 25 do not see the world in adult ways. They know they are not teenagers, but they also sense they are not adults. Parents, extended family, school teachers, church leaders and other significant adults in their lives had the best of intentions. But many did not give them the modeling, training, and experiences that would have accelerated their development toward adulthood." Join the OFFICE OF COLLEGIATE AND STUDENT MINISTRIES as RICHARD ROSS leads a one-day training event, walking through his newest book, *Accelerate: Parenting Teenagers Toward Adulthood*, equipping leaders to transition their students to adulthood.

Register Online: [onemissionstudents.org/accelerate](http://onemissionstudents.org/accelerate)

For other information, please contact State Missionary Keith Loomis at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 280, or (334) 613-2280, [kloomis@alsbom.org](mailto:kloomis@alsbom.org).



## Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### Doctrine of Christ

## Jesus: Came to Set An Example

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

**W**e have been thinking for several weeks about Jesus as the Word that *became* (John 1:14). He became flesh to reveal God, redeem sinners and teach saints. Let's think this week about the Word becoming flesh in order to be an example for all who believe upon His name. Of course, Jesus' revealing and redeeming work lies at the center of the incarnation. But within the circle of His accomplishments in His earthly ministry is that of example setting.

Later in the Gospel of John we read about Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. When He finished, He told them, "I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:15). In passing, we note that Jesus said "an example," not an ordinance. Later in the New Testament we read, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

As in prior weeks, let's make another connection with John 14:6. In thinking several weeks ago about Jesus having come to redeem sinners, we considered the idea involved in Him saying, "I am the Way." Then when we thought about Him as the Teacher, we recalled He also said, "I am the Truth." This week, as we consider Jesus as an example, ponder how it might relate to His third declaration in John 14:6, "I am the Life."

As our example, Jesus shows us what a life looks like that pleases God. And from the life He lived in the flesh, we can learn about how we might then live. Furthermore when we are born again, Jesus imparts His life to us. The simplest expression of this truth is that of Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you." We might think of this as Christ, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, living through

us the kind of life He exemplified in His earthly sojourn. Through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, we find divine enablement to become more Christlike.

Christ set for us an example in loving. He loved His own to the end (John 13:1). He set an example in forgiving. He forgave a repentant thief who had mocked Him. He gave us an example in serving, saying, "I am among you as one Who serves." He furnished us a pattern of obeying, saying to the Father, "I delight to do Thy will." He furnishes us an example in how to respond to those who hurt us. Being reviled, He reviled not again. At the end, He gave us an example in dying, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

### Finding satisfaction

As followers of Christ, what brings us the most satisfaction? What might we experience as Christians about which we would say is enough?

Jesus Himself suggested an answer for us in Matthew 10:25, "It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master."

Is it really enough for us to be more like our Master? Can we say that we are finding deep heart satisfaction in more closely resembling our example, Jesus? Would that really be enough? ❏

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.



# 'Disappointed but not thwarted'

## 'We must work and pray together,' Elliff says

(continued from page 1)

push forward in strenuous effort to advance the gospel until his replacement is found. Our efforts will not be thwarted because our president is resigning."

But Richie acknowledged the initial blow of the announcement was disappointing to many trustees.

"The room became uncommonly quiet and still ... several board members teared up while others clammed up, looking down at the floor shaking their heads," he said.

"Dr. Elliff has been such an inspiring and encouraging visionary, bringing many new positive ideas to the IMB for the advancement of the gospel. He has helped IMB become more efficient and produce 'more bang for our buck' in these days of diminished Cooperative Program giving."

Recalling Elliff's words when he came nearly three years ago — "I'm not coming as an interim ... I will serve as long as God gives me grace and energy" — Richie said several board members wondered about one or both of the Elliffs' health.

Trustees were assured health issues are not a concern, Richie noted.

"Dr. Elliff certainly brought new energy, vision and excitement to the IMB, helping to expand Southern Baptist missions involvement through programs such as Ready Reserves, Global Connect and Marketplace Advance," Richie added. "He has served well, having already served as a career missionary (Zimbabwe in the early 1980s), Southern Baptist pastor (First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., from 1985

to 2005) and as (IMB's senior vice president for spiritual nurture and church relations from 2005 to 2009)."

Elliff said he did not know what was next for him, but he does know he is "not resigning" nor is he retiring.

He also feels confident that the upcoming transition is going to be smooth.

"We must work and pray together, just as we have these past years, to make this transition as seamless and effective as possible," he said. "The cause of our Savior and the welfare of our personnel deserve nothing less than our best."

Richie agreed. "Ultimately our Commander Jesus is still in charge," he said. "We will continue to seek Him and listen to His guidance and leadership in our daily prayers and by reading and following His written instructions found in the Holy Bible."

### Search committee named

IMB trustee board chairman David Uth, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., appointed the search committee and will serve as its chairman.

Along with Uth and Wolf, search committee members include: former Alabama Baptist Matt Pearson (Ark.), John Edie (Mo.), Jay Collins (La.), Jay Gross (Texas), Scott Harris (Tenn.), Rick Lewis (Colo.), Jaye Martin (Texas), Vickie Mascagni (Miss.), John Meador (Texas), Doyle Pryor (Okla.), Cindy Snead (Ariz.), Matt Taylor (Mo.) and Kristen White (Calif.). ❏



Photo courtesy of Fernbank Baptist Church

### FERNBANK BAPTIST HOLDS NOTE BURNING SERVICE

Fernbank Baptist Church, Millport, in Lamar Baptist Association held a note burning service Jan. 29 to celebrate being debt free. A potluck fellowship lunch followed the service. Pictured here are front row (l to r): Carl Ruehling, Dan Gartman, Bill Hollis, Pastor Benton Goodman and Roger Johnson. Second row: Haskell Robbins, J.T. Beard, Jerry Hagood and Tom Younger. Back row: Don Clay, John Gartman and Jerome Rector.

# LETTERS



(continued from page 2)  
many safeguards and security measures a church should implement, talking points dealing with a subject such as this that parents can use as conversation starters with their children or lists of resources that are available in the aftermath of such a tragedy?

Debra Simmons  
Leighton, Ala.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — The Alabama Baptist regularly publishes educational articles about safeguards churches can take to prevent or limit scandalous activities such as those reported in this story. In addition the state Baptist paper takes seriously its responsibility to provide accurate, balanced and trustworthy news stories about events in Baptist life. Even when the news is disappointing, we must stand by the commitment expressed in the adage to "tell the truth and trust the people."

## THEOLOGY 101

I want to express my appreciation to *The Alabama Baptist* and to Dr. Jerry Batson for his columns in Theology 101 and for his past lessons on the paper's Sunday School curriculum page. I can't remember when I have been more strengthened spiritually and enlightened by scholarship, wisdom, compassion and down-to-earth realism in our lessons and doctrinal columns. May God continue to bless your ministry and that of Dr. Batson.

Betty Barrett  
LaFayette, Ala.

## CARDS FOR INMATES

I want to thank all the readers of *The Alabama Baptist* who helped with Christmas Cards for the HIV inmates at Limestone Correctional Facility. We collected and delivered more than 6,000 beautiful Christmas cards. Now it is time to begin collecting Easter cards and we need your help again. We follow the same guidelines as we did for Christmas cards: sign the cards, do not include a return address and do not seal the envelope. We will need the cards by April 5 in order to process them and get them to the inmates for Easter. Send cards to MAC D Ministries, c/o Scarlett Dunnam, 4030 6th Street East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404. For more information

email [adunnam4030@comcast.net](mailto:adunnam4030@comcast.net) or call 205-553-1592.

Because the HIV inmates are now housed in more facilities than just Limestone, the cards will be distributed a little differently. You can be sure that the cards will go to inmates who need a special touch of care and encouragement. Who can better give that than Alabama Baptists and their friends who want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus?

Scarlett Dunnam  
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

*2014 Festival of Flowers*



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**S**urely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord Himself, is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation."

Isaiah 12:2



**Know what to do in case of suspected concussion.**

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

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

**Any athlete with a suspected concussion:**

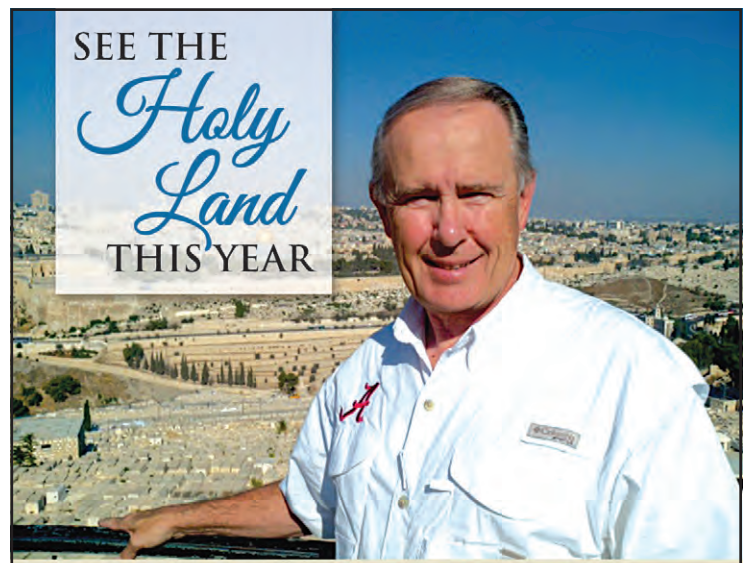
- Should be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY/ACTIVITY
- Should be urgently assessed medically
- Should not be left alone
- Should not drive a motor vehicle



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# Through the Valley

*Psalm 23*

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**SUSIE JAMES** is the program director for Miracles Ministries. Susie offers her own style of contemporary Christian music and would love to sing at your church.

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— Pastor Steve Dunn, Eastwood Baptist Church, Monroeville

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# Faith-friendly

## Alabama's Erwin Brothers devoted to Christian filmmaking

By Anna Keller  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**M**oms' Night Out is a laugh-out-loud comedy that Americans nationwide are sure to love. It will be released Mother's Day weekend in May (perfect timing for a movie of this name and subject) and sheds light

on just how important mothers are to families — all in a hilariously engaging way.

Perhaps the best part about this film? It's a family-friendly — and faith-friendly — comedy that's actually really, really funny, regardless of a viewer's belief or background.

"We tested this film, and I'm always so nervous about that first

MOMS' NIGHT OUT co-director and director of photography, Jon Erwin (left), discusses the chase scene with Andy Erwin, his brother and co-director. MOMS' NIGHT OUT, the new family comedy from Sony Affirm and Provident Films, will screen in Birmingham in early March.



Photo by Saeed Adyani

screening," said one of the film's directors, Andy Erwin. "But people were rolling in the aisles and surging with laughter. The main feedback we received was, 'Finally — someone made a good, clean comedy.'"

The movie tells the story of Allyson, a mother of young children who's reached her breaking point and just needs a night out with other female friends. What was meant to be a relaxing evening away from children and the responsibilities that come with parenting quickly becomes a chaotic, drama-filled series of events that leads Allyson to realize just how crucial she is to her family.

Erwin also said that among the faith-based screenings, there were several pastors' wives who came up after the film praising the way the movie had represented women in their role, especially as expressed in this movie by actress Patricia Heaton of "Everybody Loves Raymond" fame.

Erwin co-directed the film with his brother, Jon — someone who he's worked with on numerous projects including ESPN College Football Primetime as camera operators, directing music videos and commercials, and producing concerts and TV programs for platinum music artists like Amy Grant, Switchfoot and Montgomery Gentry. This interest in film is something the brothers came by honestly, said their father, Hank Erwin, a former Alabama senator.

"Before I got into politics, I was

in radio and TV for 35 years, and while the boys were growing up I'd take them with me on projects and so they grew up around cameras all their lives," Hank Erwin said. "In fact, Jon came to me when he was in junior high school and said he and Andy felt called by God to make movies, and they formed Erwin Brothers Motion Pictures that very day."

"Moms' Night Out" is the Erwin brothers' sophomore feature-length film, following the movie "October Baby," which they both wrote and directed.

"Moms' Night Out" spoke to us because it's what Jon and I are both living right now," Andy Erwin said. "We both have young kids and our wives are absolute superheroes."

Andy Erwin also is thrilled with the cast they were able to secure for this movie: all actors were their top choices and along with Heaton include Sarah Drew of "Grey's Anatomy," Trace Adkins and Sean Astin. The film was shot in Birmingham, with church scenes taking place at First Baptist

Church, Pelham, a congregation Andy Erwin describes as "very supportive."

"Jon and I are both from Alabama and live in Birmingham now, so it was fun to film this movie in our home state," he said.

Though the movie premieres nationwide in May, it will screen in Birmingham in early March. Andy and Jon attend The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

Hank Erwin is proud of his sons for showcasing their home state in this film as well. "They could have moved to Nashville or Hollywood or Atlanta, but they chose to

stay in Alabama and make their movies here because they believe in the values here in Alabama," Hank Erwin said. "I think it has the potential to give Birmingham a boost of tourism since the movie gives us the opportunity to profile the whole area."

Andy Erwin said he's been encouraged by the opportunities Hollywood has given to faith-friendly communities of late and suggests that people in the faith community use their movie ticket as their vote for more films like this one.

"Hollywood is listening, and the best way to see more movies that are faith-friendly is to buy a ticket and see the film," he said. "When we set out to make this movie the first thing we were looking for was for it to be funny, but from there we made a point to touch on values we feel are important." ☺



**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**.

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For more information, visit [www.thebridgeevent.com](http://www.thebridgeevent.com).

## Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

Recently I received a call from a homeowner who asked, "Can I get a reverse mortgage if my home is paid for?" My answer was, "Yes." Sometimes I'm asked the opposite of that, "Can I get a reverse mortgage if I still owe?" That answer is "Yes" also. That is if you don't owe more than the percentage the reverse mortgage pays, but if you do and if you're able, you could bring approved funds to the closing table to finish out the shortfall.

In addition to questions, I also continue to run into the myth that a person who does a reverse mortgage is signing their home over to the government. This is definitely NOT true!

The homeowners name stays on the deed and it's still their home. They can add a room, plant flowers or pull flowers up. And as

Jason Ingram at USA Title says, "You can paint your house pink, purple or polka dot because it remains your home." The government is insuring your reverse mortgage.



Jimmy Dixon

If you have a question about reverse mortgages or if you'd like to apply, please call me. I've been specializing in reverse mortgages for over nine years and would love to talk with you as much as Zacchaeus loved talking to Jesus.

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and active deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.

For a free brochure, quote or DVD, contact him today at 205-567-4800 or [jdixon@mcgowinking.com](mailto:jdixon@mcgowinking.com).



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## — Correction —

In the article "Work of art": Despite being blind, Mote paints pictures with lyrics" in the Feb. 13 issue, Gordon Mote was noted as being "the first blind student in the country to be accepted into the public school system." Mote was not the first, but he was among the first as noted in his biography at [www.gordonmote.com](http://www.gordonmote.com).

# CAMPUS

## News



### UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UMobile Classical Concert Spans Two Centuries of Classical Masters:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) Center for the Performing Arts presented Music of the Classical Masters at Dauphin Way Methodist Church, Mobile, Feb. 25. Scott Wright, UMobile conductor in residence, was guest conductor.

Also showcased were the UMobile Strings Ensemble, guest faculty artist and acclaimed organist Duane Plash, the University Chorale, Chamber Singers and orchestra as well as vocalist and adjunct instructor Darla Earnest.

### JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Professor Honored:** Billie Jean Young, artist in residence and associate professor of fine and performing arts at Judson College in Marion, has been chosen for induction into the Black Belt Hall of Fame.

Young is an actor, writer and civil rights advocate. She has educated and inspired hundreds of audiences through her poetry, lec-

tures and dramatic performances and has worked worldwide on issues of social and economic justice.

Young's life experiences and creative gifts have enabled her to become one of Judson College's most respected and beloved teachers, mentors and role models. The induction ceremony will be March 14.

► **Judson Western Team Hosts Shows:** On Feb. 15 the Judson College Western team hosted two shows. Also competing were Berry College in Mount Berry, Ga., and the University of North Georgia.

► **Judson College's Huntseat Equestrian Team Starts Strong:** The Judson College Huntseat equestrian team recently traveled to Woodstock, Ga., to compete in its first two shows of the 2014 season. The shows were hosted by Georgia Tech and Kennesaw State University.

► **Judson College Financial Aid Office to Host FAFSA Workshops:** The Judson College Financial Aid Office will host FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) workshops for anyone interested in applying for financial aid. The workshops are available for current or future students

who wish to attend any school, not just Judson. The workshops will be held March 11 and March 13, 5-7 p.m., on Judson's campus. For more information and to register, visit [www.judson.edu/fafsa](http://www.judson.edu/fafsa).

### SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Author Wes Moore to Lecture at Samford March 17:** Youth advocate and best-selling author Wes Moore will be the 2014 speaker in the Thomas and Marla Corts Distinguished Author Series at Samford University on March 17 at 7 p.m. in Wright Center.

Moore is an Army veteran, social entrepreneur and host of "Beyond Belief" on the Oprah Winfrey Network. His first book, "The Other Wes Moore," which contrasts Moore's life with that of a man who shared his name but made bad choices, became a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller.

The story chronicles how two kids with the same name in the same city made different choices that resulted in one being a Rhodes

Scholar, decorated combat veteran, White House Fellow and business leader, and the other serving a life sentence in prison for felony murder. A young adult version of the book, "Discovering Wes Moore," was published in 2012.

Moore's talk at Samford will focus on the importance of education and how small choices can make big differences in life.

For more information, call 205-726-2853.

► **Spring Enrollment Record:** Samford University has set another record for spring semester enrollment, university officials announced Feb. 20.

Spring 2014 enrollment is 4,698, topping the record spring enrollment of 4,605 set in 2012. The 2014 totals are 106 students higher than the spring 2013 enrollment. The 2014 spring enrollment includes 2,864 undergraduates and 1,834 graduate and professional students.

Samford has had record enrollments in eight of the last nine semesters, including an all-time record of 4,833 in fall 2013. 📖



## Want to know God?

**Pastor Ron Madison**  
Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville

I am in the middle of my 43rd year of marriage. The young woman I first saw as she walked through the door of her parents' home in Juneau, Alaska, where I was serving as a summer missionary, has become my wife, best friend, spiritual confidant, mother of our children and grandmother to our children's children. We have shared a rich and full life together. But there was a time when she was nothing more to me than a picture in a frame whose parents thought their only child was not only God's gift to them, but to much of the world as well. While I appreciated their articulated love for their daughter, my own love for her did not begin until we met face to face and I began to perceive in her many of the qualities and characteristics her parents had told me about. While I truly did fall in love with her almost the same instant we first met that initial reaction grew steadily through the years, being marked by a public commitment of marriage, giving life to a family and serving God together in various places and capacities. I have never had one moment of regret regarding this relationship of love and commitment.

The beginning of a life-long, and eternal, relationship with Jesus shares many of the characteristics I described above. Any relationship begins with an introduction. And the best way to be introduced to Jesus, the One the Father sent to be the Savior of all who believe, is to be introduced to Him by someone who already has a relationship with Him. The personal witness of one who is already a Christian remains the single most effective way for an individual to become a Christian.

Not everyone will have the opportunity of being introduced this way or will not be ready to listen when a testimony is shared. However, the Gospel of John remains a most effective tool in introducing seekers and searchers to who Jesus is and to what He came to do on this earth. John 3:16 still contains a full message of how a person can come to faith: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." 📖

## 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:** Siluria Baptist Church of Alabaster is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Siluria Baptist Church, Pastor Search, P.O. Box 1677, Alabaster, AL 35007, or email: [siluriabaptist.committee@gmail.com](mailto:siluriabaptist.committee@gmail.com).

**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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:secretary@enonbaptist.net).

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR:** Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Avenue, Gadsden, AL 35903. Seeking bivocational pastor. Send resumés to the above address.

**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. Joey Bentley at 334-365-9720 or email resumé to: [pastorjoey@libertybaptistlife.org](mailto: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@att.net](mailto:meekbaptist@att.net). [www.meekbc.com](http://www.meekbc.com).

**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: [tammy@fbcvalley.org](mailto:tammy@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](mailto:resumes@ewestwood.org).

**FINANCIAL SECRETARY:** Sharon Heights Baptist Church of Brookside, Ala., is seeking a part-time financial secretary (32 hours/week). ACS experience preferred. Send resumé and references (including pastor reference) to: Sharon Heights Baptist Church, ATTN: Rev. Jay Strickland, 520 Bivens Brookside Road, Birmingham, AL 35214, or email to: [jay@sharonheights.org](mailto:jay@sharonheights.org). No phone calls.

### BUSINESS

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**CHRISTIAN VALUES BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY:** Christian Values 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.

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### CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

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pand 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

**BALTIMORE CONVENTION:** Choice Hotel accommodations, walking distance, with breakfast. Washington D.C., motor-coach tours. Sunday and Thursday \$99. Lancaster, Penn., post-convention trip. Christian Travelers, 1-800-972-8952, email: [charlescooper34@att.net](mailto:charlescooper34@att.net).

**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](http://www.gulfshorescondos.com).

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## About Alabama

### Importance of Workforce Development

By Jim Williams  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Few states can match Alabama's success in attracting new business investment during the past two decades. These results in industries ranging from autos to aerospace stem from a business-friendly attitude, teamwork among economic development professionals, a highly regarded worker-training program and willingness to compete in offering financial incentives.

Continuing this economic development success is important because it translates into better jobs and higher incomes for Alabamians. But to continue its success, Alabama must overcome obstacles that include slow population growth and low educational attainment.

The state's population is projected to grow at a rate well below the pace of job creation, creating a worker shortfall. The causes: relatively few people are moving in, the working-age population is limited by the aging of baby boomers and participation in the labor force is low.

Also 65 percent of all jobs in the future are expected to require postsecondary education, training or certification; today's workforce is well short of that.

Large numbers of Alabamians have no high school diploma, and while the high school graduation rate has risen to 80 percent, this still leaves 20 per-

cent not graduating on time. A third of those entering Alabama's colleges and universities require remedial math and/or English courses.

Business, education and government leaders are pursuing a number of goals and strategies to address workforce issues. The State Board of Education's Plan 2020 targets a 90 percent high school graduation rate, with strategies to link student academics with career plans.

The Alabama Community College System is working to develop apprenticeships with businesses and to increase dual enrollment, adult education and career-coaching programs.

The Legislature has created an Alabama Workforce Council to link business and education leaders in pursuit of workforce improvements. The Mobile area has implemented a local workforce council of this type, and other communities are adopting similar approaches.

It has been estimated that raising the high school graduation rate to 90 percent would alone lead to \$100 million in additional personal income along with lower costs of crime and social services.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama. Jim may be contacted at [jwillia@samford.edu](mailto:jwillia@samford.edu).*

# 'Ukraine needs Christ'

## Baptist lay preacher Turchynov elected as interim president

A Baptist lay preacher has been elected as Ukraine's interim president, prompting calls for Christians to pray for the beleaguered nation and its new leader.

New interim president Oleksandr Turchynov was the right-hand man of Yulia Tymoshenko, the former prime minister imprisoned by Viktor Yanukovich when Yanukovich became president in 2010. The former prime minister was released immediately following Yanukovich's removal from office Feb. 23, an ousting that came on the heels of a three-month-long protest movement in Kiev, the nation's capital.

Parliament voted Turchynov interim president until early elections take place in May. Turchynov serves at an Evangelical Baptist Union of Ukraine church called *Slovo Zhizni*, or Word of Life.

Nik Ripken, an expert on the persecuted church and 25-year veteran with the International Mission Board (IMB), said Baptists in Ukraine have a reputation, a moral base, that dates back to their witness to the government during the days of the Soviet Union. Ripken visited with many of Ukraine's Baptist leaders in 1998 to hear and record the stories of their faith and persecution in that era.

"Now they are reaping the rewards of that witness and moral fiber," he said. "We must pray that they do not lose in power what they held so dear in opposition."

### Support from public, Baptists

Tim Johnson, an IMB worker in Kiev, said Turchynov is generally well liked by the public and has a reputation for being honest and trustworthy.

"My Ukrainian friends have expressed pride that a Baptist can hold such a role in a majority Orthodox country," Johnson said.

In a *Christianity Today* article, Valery Antonyuk, vice president of the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, said, "But on behalf of the Church we must ... speak the whole truth; we must say that which is still hard to accept and fulfill; that, which is a precondition for a better

future. Therefore the Church calls the Ukrainian nation to more than just feelings of human justice — to Christian forgiveness, grace and reconciliation. We pray to God for repentance for the guilty.

"In order to unite the nation, in order to reconcile its various parts, its various social, cultural and political groups, laws and justice are not enough. Without repentance, grace, forgiveness and reconciliation, the country will remain divided and in conflict," he said.



TURCHYNOV

The All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists is a member organization of the Baptist World Alliance and has more than 121,000 members in more than 2,300 churches.

In the midst of changes on the political front, Ukrainian believers continue to share Christ faithfully in Independence Square. Since Feb. 23, Ukrainians have flooded the city center to honor the protesters who died in the conflict and to mourn corporately the loss of life and the destruction. News sources vary on the number of deaths, but most agree that more than 80 people died and thousands were wounded.

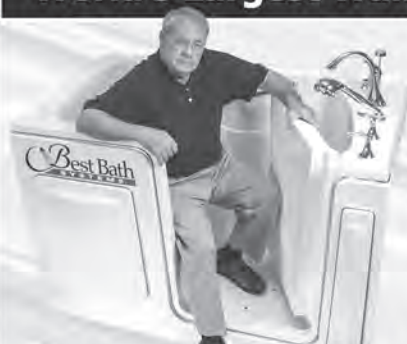
Pavel Unguryan, director of the International Mission Department for Ukrainian Baptists, said, "During all these days of protests and confrontations the Christian community in Ukraine has been the light and the salt for both parties."

Unguryan, who was a member of Parliament in Ukraine from 2008 to 2012, said Christian doctors, nurses, cooks, students and other Christian groups "have been helping whenever there was a need." Unguryan said that the national crisis led "churches and even denominations to get united in prayer and fasting for peace and God's intervention."

Unguryan suggested there is much work left to be done. "Many people have much anger and hatred for opponents. People are disappointed in all politicians and do not want to forgive anyone."

He believes the Church can bring healing. "We need to face this challenge with Christ. What Ukraine needs is not just a change of people in authority but a change of the system. ... Ukraine needs Christ." (BP, BWA)

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Photo courtesy of Charles Brown

### WOOD-CUTTING MINISTRY

The Brotherhood of Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Collinsville, in DeKalb Baptist Association helped a family in need in January by cutting and donating a truckload of wood to them. The church's WMU provided coffee, sausage and biscuits for the 19 Brotherhood members after the fact.



Alabamian Wynona Rogers shares her story in the new book 'Riches to Rags: One Woman's Story of Betrayal and Redemption' about how she lost her home, business and health as a result of a bookkeeper's betrayal. Rogers says people can take your health and wealth, but your happiness is up to you.

# 'Never give up'



ABPnews/Herald photo

## Alabamian is victim of former missionary's theft; loses health, wealth, but keeps sense of humor

**A**n Alabama woman who lost her home, business and health as a result of a bookkeeper's scam said in a new book that she never would have met the man who stole tens of thousands of dollars from her and her clients if the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) had prosecuted him for embezzling missions funds in Turkey.

Wynona Rogers, author of "Riches to Rags: One Woman's Story of Betrayal and Redemption," said she first met Benton Gray Harvey through his mother, who worked for her at Starfish Insurance Agency in Gulf Shores.

Harvey and his roommate started coming by her office and they became friends. She went to the office Christmas party where Harvey worked. His boss stopped by their table to tell her what a great employee he was and that she didn't know what she would do without him.

Rogers knew that Harvey was a former missionary, but what no one told her was that in 2005 the International Mission Board (IMB) had won a judgment of \$359,499.62 to recover money he admitted to stealing earmarked for earthquake relief and other purposes in Istanbul.

Wendy Norvelle, IMB spokesperson, told *The Alabama Baptist* that in 2003 the IMB discovered "evidence of some questionable accounting and a thorough investigation was immediately launched." Harvey resigned during that time.

The topic also was referenced from the convention floor during the 2008 SBC annual meeting when a messenger asked about it, but little information was shared.

However, a notation was added to the public record of his resignation, noting that he had failed to observe the lifestyle expected of an IMB missionary, Norvelle said.

"To IMB's knowledge, no prospective employer of Mr. Harvey ever contacted the IMB to ask for a reference; had such a reference been sought, the IMB would have provided its opinion that Mr. Harvey would not be a good fit for any position involving financial responsibility," she said.

Norvelle also noted that IMB trustees and staff carefully studied every legal option available to address the accounting discrepancies that occurred on Harvey's watch, including seeking criminal prosecution. There were several factors that convinced the IMB that seeking prosecution was not a viable option, including the fact that Harvey's service was overseas and the funds were taken overseas. Prosecution in the United States was not an option because U.S. courts did not have jurisdiction over the overseas events. Also Harvey had already returned to the U.S. from his overseas service, so the country where he served lacked jurisdiction over him. "The fact that money is not accounted for is not enough (to prosecute)," Norvelle said. "Clear evidence of criminal intent is required."

The IMB decided the best course of action was to pursue civil court remedies to recover the money. This was done and Harvey signed a promissory note, which he later defaulted on and a default judgment was entered against him in Richmond, Va., Norvelle said.

"Because this default judgment was a matter of public record, it would ordinarily appear when running a background and credit report on Mr. Harvey," Norvelle said.

Rogers said it never occurred to her to do a background check before hiring Harvey as her bookkeeper. He volunteered to help take care of her dogs and every morning brought her coffee. Afterward her health started to decline.

"I got to the point I was so weak I couldn't keep anything down," she said. "I went from a size 14 to a size 2. I was a walking stick."

Rogers said she has reason to believe Harvey was putting arsenic in her coffee to get her out of the way so he could sell bogus homeowner policies to at least 118 customers. Harvey pleaded guilty in 2011 to a single count of misappropriation of insurance premiums in exchange for a lighter sentence by cooperating with federal law enforcement in another investigation.

Prosecutors wouldn't share the nature of that cooperation, and a U.S. district judge withheld a separate indictment detailing the remaining crimes of which Harvey was accused. The plea bargain called for a minimum sentence of two years in federal

prison, but when Harvey failed to appear for his sentencing hearing the judge increased it to three and a half years. He is now serving prison time.

That left Rogers responsible for all the customers to whom Harvey sold policies without her knowledge and kept the premiums for himself. She testified at a 2009 hearing in Mobile that she had spent more than \$450,000 repaying victims. She was ordered to pay a \$36,000 fine and adopt multiple accounting controls or else lose her license to sell insurance.

After the case received publicity, the IRS got involved, and she discovered that Harvey had shredded checks she wrote to pay her taxes. She owed them \$26,000 that she had to borrow from her mother.

### From '\$4 million to 68 cents'

"I went from being worth \$4 million dollars to 68 cents," Rogers said.

"I blame the International Mission Board," she said. "If they had put him in prison, I never would have met him. If they had done the right thing — because one of the Ten Commandments is 'thou shalt not steal' and he stole" — things would have been different, she said. "They just chose to look the other way; turn a blind eye to it."

Rogers said she never expected to write a book, until

someone else mentioned it. A couple came by her office one day and Rogers asked them if they wanted a refund or needed insurance, and the wife said: "No, you already paid us back. We just want an update on what's going on in your life. I said, 'Why would you want an update?' She said, 'Because you've got the most interesting life of any person I've ever met. You need to write a book.'"

"I said, 'I ain't writing no book,'" she said. "But I started doing it for therapy. I wanted to find some humor in what happened in the day. I never really planned on writing a book. I did it for my own sanity."

"Then eventually I had to sell my business because I wasn't making enough to pay rent and gas and all that, so when I moved in with Mom I decided that lady was right and I needed to write a book."

She said she never expected the book to be published. Another thing she never expected was being invited to share her story in churches and other venues.

### New perspective on a lot of things

"I took speech in college, and all I had to do was speak five minutes to get an 'A,'" she recalled. "I got up, and I had a poster of a shark, and I pointed to it and I said, 'Stay out of the water' and I sat down."

Recently Rogers said she was invited to speak for 15 or 20 minutes and didn't think she could do it. "Well I talked 45," she said. "I couldn't shut up. It was all about the book and they had questions."

Rogers said a lot more happened that didn't make it into the book. "Frankly I got tired of reliving it," she said. "I mean, every time I wrote it I cried."

"I did solve one thing," she said. "He took away my money. He took away my health. But one thing he couldn't take from me was my happiness. That was up to me."

"Falling down is not the sin," she said. "The sin is not getting back up. If you just let it beat you down you can't do that. You've got to dream big and work hard and never give up. That's my theory anyway. It may not be everybody's, but it's mine."

Rogers said she hopes the book, written in a style using what she calls "redneck humor" for perspective and a motto of "keep it light," will give hope to others who are going through hard times.

"Bad things happen to good people, and if you hit bottom the only way you can go is up," she said. "Don't give up. Keep trying."

Rogers said both she and her husband are currently seeking a job. "I'm doing OK on book sales, but it's not enough to pay all the bills," she said. "I actually went on food stamps a couple of months ago. I didn't have a choice. I never thought I'd be the type person to end up broke, poor, on food stamps, going to food banks, and it's all thanks to Benton Gray Harvey Jr."

Rogers said she is already thinking about a sequel. "I'm going to get my money back one book at a time," she said. (ABP, TAB)





BP photo

Anne Schleper (second from the left) battles a Finland player during a women's ice hockey preliminary round game in Sochi. Schleper shares how her Christian faith impacts her game.

# 'Audience of One'

## US Olympian focuses on God during competition

**A**nne Schleper, a defenseman on the United States women's Olympic hockey team, is an Olympian with a plan. Schleper, 24, said she approached her team's quest for a gold medal in Sochi, Russia, as a Christ follower who invites Him onto the ice with her.

The U.S. played Feb. 20 in the finals where they lost to Canada 3-2.

"I'm a Christian and nothing happens in my life that isn't filtered through God's hands first," she wrote Feb. 6 on her Twitter account.

Hockey players who compete internationally, as Schleper has been doing since 2008, can struggle at times with trying to impress teammates, coaches, family and friends, she said. More than anything her walk with Christ helps her to overcome pressures that may come on the Olympic stage.

The U.S. and Canada have owned the medal platform in women's hockey, winning all five of the gold medals, four silvers and a bronze since it became an Olympic sport in 1998.

But "it's not about that," said Schleper, talking about the pressure of playing in the big game. "It's all about my audience of One and playing only for God."

She learned how to do that at an Athletes in Action training camp that "absolutely changed (my) life." She was raised in church but had missed out on having a personal, daily time with Him. The

Holy Spirit moving through the athletes at the camp helped her put it all together.

"That was kind of my game-changing moment," Schleper said. "That's when I really got to know the Lord. I developed that personal relationship with Him, which I was missing all along growing up."



SCHLEPER

Born in St. Cloud, Minn., Schleper said she was a typical Minnesotan in that "you pretty much learn how to skate before you learn to walk." She won numerous honors with the University of Minnesota Golden Gophers including: All-America; Big Ten Medal of Honor; all-conference all-academic team (three times); second all-time scorer for defensemen (114 career points); and a member of the 2011-2012 national championship team as an assistant captain.

She proved to be a durable player, never missing a game and setting the school record for career games played with 158.

She almost made the 2010 U.S. Olympic team that won a silver medal in Vancouver, lasting until the final cuts. When she did make it this time her hometown was ready to celebrate. St. Cloud Mayor Dave Kleis showed up at a Jan. 31 rally in her honor at her high school, St. Cloud Cathedral, to proclaim it "Anne Schleper Day."

And now that the 2014 Winter Olympics are over, Schleper's desire to be a reliable presence that her teammates can trust still shines.

"I just constantly try to be a light to them," she said. "I want them to be drawn to me so that they are ultimately drawn to Him." (BP)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Islamic extremists invade Christian village, kill at least 106

**IZGHE, Nigeria** — A large contingent of Islamic extremist rebels from Boko Haram invaded Izghe, a predominantly Christian village in northeastern Nigeria, on Feb. 15 and slaughtered at least 106 people, sources said.

Dressed in military fatigues, the Boko Haram rebels, who seek to impose sharia (Islamic law) throughout Nigeria, reportedly shot some people and slit the throats of others while shouting "Allahu Akbar [God is greater]" in Izghe village of the Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno state. They also destroyed homes and shops.

"We have received information about yet another attack from my friends and family members in Gwoza," said Enoch Wonder, a Christian worker from Gwoza now in Jos.

Maina Ularamu, chairman of the Gwoza LGA, said reports reaching him from the area indicated that more than 100 Christians had been killed in the attack.

The massacre beginning at midnight reportedly lasted about five hours without intervention from the military. Izghe village is about 86 miles from Maiduguri and is close to the Sambisa Forest, which has served as an operational camp for Boko Haram.

### Moroccan judge overturns conviction against Christian

**FEZ, Morocco** — An appeals court judge in Morocco on Feb. 6 overturned a conviction against a Christian convert from Islam who had been sentenced to 30 months in prison for alleged proselytizing. The judge in the Court of Appeal in Fez dismissed the case against Mohamed El Baladi, 31, because of lack of evidence, sources close to him said.

On Aug. 28, 2013, in the remote town of Ain Aicha, Taounate Province, 50 miles from Fez, security officials arrested El Baladi for alleged proselytizing of two Muslims after someone complained to police about a conversation he allegedly had with them about his faith.

On Sept. 3, 2013, a court in Taounate found El Baladi guilty of attempting to incite at least one young Muslim to leave Islam and sentenced him to 30 months in prison, along with fining him \$182.

The penal code describes proselytizing as any attempt to stop someone from exercising their religious beliefs or from attending religious services.

### Arrests for 'extremist' activity continue in Russia

**NABEREZHNYE CHELNY, Russia** — Arrests and prosecutions for "extremist" activity continue against Russian Muslim readers of the works of Islamic theologian Said Nursi. The criminal trial of Inur Khafizov and Fedail Salimzyanov began again in a magistrates' court in Naberezhnye Chelny, in Russia's Republic of Tatarstan on Jan. 29. Proceedings were due to re-start Feb. 19, local Muslims said. The criminal trial of two Muslim women, Nakiya Sharifullina and Laura Khapinova, began in a different magistrates' court in the town Jan. 22. The trial was due to resume in February.

Also changes to "extremism" related Articles of the Criminal Code were signed into law by President Vladimir Putin on Feb. 3. The changes impose higher fines and longer prison sentences for "extremism" related offences. This makes it easier for the state to obtain legal permission for surveillance techniques such as phone tapping.

### Islamic extremists suspected of killing church leader

**MOMBASA, Kenya** — Suspected Islamic extremists are suspected of killing a church leader in Mombasa, Kenya, for sharing his faith near a mosque and alerting authorities to security threats.

In the Majengo area of the coastal city where leaders at the Masjid Musa Mosque were suspected of training violent jihadists, 59-year-old Lawrence Kazungu Kadenge, an assistant pastor for Glory of God Ministries Church, was killed Feb. 2. Saying they were looking for militant equipment, authorities had raided the mosque that day, reportedly leaving a Muslim man and a police officer dead.

Area Christians believe hard-line Muslims were upset at Kadenge for evangelizing near the mosque and for informing authorities about security threats, a Christian leader said.