

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

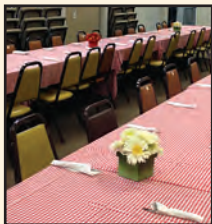


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UNSHAKEABLE faith



BP photo

Hobby Lobby's Obamacare challenge called landmark religious liberty case

Once Steve Green sets his path, there's no turning back. Not when he and his high school girlfriend, Jackie, totaled their cars playing chicken. "No one turned off," he said, recalling how he aimed right at her and she just kept coming. A year later, she married him.

Not when he saw no point in college, going directly into his family's Hobby Lobby craft store business. Green, now 50, rose up from assembling picture frames for "bubble gum money" at age 7 through every job, including cleaning toilets, to president of the \$3.3 billion national chain, one of the nation's largest private companies.

Religious liberty

And certainly not now, he said, when the U.S. government is challenging his unshakeable Christian faith and his religious liberty.

It was not surprising when Green's path led straight up the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court to witness oral arguments in the case *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores and Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v. Sebelius* on March 25.

That's Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. The department included all Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved forms of contraception among services required for insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

Contraception coverage

Hobby Lobby has provided insurance with contraception coverage for years, paying for 16 of the FDA-approved forms, from barrier methods to pills that prevent fertilization. Not covered: intrauterine devices and morning-after pills such as Plan B. Those, the FDA acknowledges, could prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the womb.

Blocking implantation would "terminate life," Green said. "We won't pay for any abortive products. We believe life begins at conception.

... The government is forcing us to choose between following our faith and following the law. I say that's a choice no American and no American business should have to make."

While scores of faith-based organizations and private business owners have filed suit seeking exemption from the mandate, Hobby Lobby has become the standard-bearer for religious opposition. The potentially landmark case is a First Amendment battle testing that caused the court to lengthen oral argument time by 50 percent.

Supporters of the so-called contraception mandate fear that a victory for the plaintiffs could prompt businesses to flout any number of laws

by claiming a violation of religious freedom.

They ask: What about a woman's right to be covered for the full array of birth control options available through the Affordable Care Act? Is it really the company's right to decide that the only drugs and medical procedures they'll cover are the ones that conform to the owner's personal faith?

Administration supporters also argue that Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. claim religious rights the Constitution bestows on individuals, not corporations.

That's not how the Greens and their supporters see it. To them, you can't separate the family from the corporation, because the family runs the corporation according to its deeply held Christian values. Hobby Lobby, for example, closes its more than 600 stores on Sundays, pays employees far above the minimum wage and limits store hours so employees can spend more time with their families.

Following the March 25 oral arguments, the Supreme Court must decide two basic questions:

► First does Hobby Lobby, the

corporation, have religious rights protected by the First Amendment?

► Second if the corporation does have religious rights, have those rights been violated under a 20-year-old statute that sets a high bar for government interference when it comes to protecting religious freedom?



RNS photo

Hobby Lobby President Steve Green feels the U.S. government is challenging his Christian faith and religious liberty.

Jeff Mateer, senior counsel at the conservative Liberty Institute, said the question of a corporation's religious rights is not a tough one.

"If the court determines that they do not have that right, it's really going to change 200 years of legal precedent where we have assumed that corporations do have First Amendment rights," he said. He pointed to the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in the *Citizens*

United campaign finance case, in which the justices overturned bans on corporate political spending as a violation of freedom of speech.

If the court decides that Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood do have religious rights, it would then have to turn its attention to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Congress passed it in (See 'Hobby Lobby,' page 11)

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COMMENT

Would Jesus 'Cleanse' the Church?

Righteous wrath overflowed as Jesus sent merchants and moneychangers scurrying from Temple Mount in Jerusalem. So incensed was our Lord by what He witnessed in the House of God that He took matters into His own hands and "cleansed the temple" (Matt. 21:12-17). One can only wonder how Jesus would react if He walked into a modern-day church this Sunday. Would Jesus celebrate what He found or would He want to "cleanse" the church as He cleansed the temple?

When Jesus entered Jerusalem His destination was not Herod's palace, the site of political power. Nor did He go to the Roman stronghold called the Fortress of Antonia, the symbol of military power. Instead Jesus went to the temple because His was a spiritual kingdom, not a political kingdom nor a military kingdom. Jesus went to the temple for one purpose — to demonstrate His authority.

By asserting His authority in the House of God, Jesus identified with God. He also challenged the rule of the high priest and His followers in the epicenter of their power.

What Jesus walked into as He topped the stairs leading onto Temple Mount is sometimes referred to as the Bazaar of the Sons of Annas. It was a Middle Eastern market with oxen, sheep, pigeons and doves for sale and moneychangers dealing in currencies from across the Roman Empire.

The Greek word used for temple "hieron" generally referred to the whole temple area, but the market area covered only the Court of the Gentiles. Beyond that was the Court of Women. For a non-Jew to enter that area meant death. That was followed by the Court of Israel, a worship place for men. Also there was a Court of the Priests where sacrifices were offered and, finally, there was the Holy of Holies that was entered only on the Day of Atonement by the high priest.

Originally the markets served a good purpose. They allowed pilgrims to buy sacrifices in Jerusalem rather than having to bring them from afar. Of the moneychangers, the Talmud says, "On the 25th day of Adar (the month before the Passover), moneychangers were installed in the temple itself



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

to help in collecting the half-shekel donation."

Unfortunately by Jesus' day the good idea had gone terribly wrong. The Jewish historian Josephus writes of high priests who seemed to have given up their love of God for the love of money. He singles out Annas and his five sons for special

condemnation (John 18:12). Convenience became extortion as prices were inflated and exchange rates exorbitant. Pilgrims were financially gouged at every turn. The marketplace was a den of thieves.

For the Gentiles seeking God there was no room. Profit was more important than prayer; private gain more than personal devotion.

Could Jesus have done any less than to cleanse the area of that which prevented people from having access to God? He was the Son of God. His kingdom was a spiritual king-

dom tied to the presence of God. But the high priest had turned the House of Prayer into a bazaar. Even the act of driving out the merchants and the moneychangers demonstrated Jesus' authority.

What about the church today? Like the ancient temple, our churches are supposed to be part of the spiritual kingdom of God. If Jesus climbed the stairs into our churches what would He find?

Houses of prayer

Many, perhaps most, Alabama Baptist churches are houses of prayer. Dedicated men and women love the Lord and earnestly seek to follow Him in daily life. Alabama Baptists are blessed with outstanding pastors serving in a variety of minis-

tries. Some endure personal sacrifices in order to help their congregations grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Not all churches are so blessed. A bazaar of distractions can still prevent those who come saying "We would see Jesus" from ever getting near the Lord of the church.

In some places it is the distraction of a fractious fellowship. Such churches go through the rituals of worship, but the real focus of the congregation is power and control. Like the apostle John, the seekers for Jesus might ask these churches how they can love God whom they have not seen and hate their brothers whom they have seen (1 John 4:20)?

Another marketplace distraction relates to the various ideas proclaimed. In one place a political message is promoted. One can hear about the need to elect this person or defeat that issue but little about "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

A nearby "booth" in the marketplace of ideas may sell the latest in pop psychology or the newest book review. Still another offers some form of a perverted gospel.

About self

The church settings that have turned into bazaars today have personalities who mastermind all that takes place just as Annas and his infamous son did on Temple Mount. Some seem pure charlatans, some manipulators, while others seem to seek ego satisfaction. All appear concerned primarily about self.

Perhaps today's religious bazaars started with good intentions like the temple markets but along the way they have become as corrupt as the one Jesus labeled a "den of thieves."

If Jesus came to these churches what would He do? Would He weep over them like He wept over Jerusalem, which refused to be gathered to God? Would He leave them to their certain destruction because they choose personal gain over godly obedience? Would He "cleanse" them in hopes of renewing them to their original purposes?

Matthew 7:21 quotes Jesus as saying, "Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." All of us in the Church should listen closely because Jesus is Lord, and one day He will demonstrate that authority when He passes judgment on what takes place there.

"The church settings that have turned into bazaars today have personalities who mastermind all that takes place just as Annas and his infamous son did on Temple Mount."

"Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 7:21

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

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Taste of HOPE

Gadsden's Twelfth Street serves community through meal ministry

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, launched its Taste of Hope Hot Meal Center on March 1, volunteers anticipated that maybe nine or 10 people would show up. Instead they welcomed 74 people into their fellowship hall between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. that Saturday.

The church served a meal of baked ham, sweet potato casserole, green beans, a roll, assorted desserts, coffee, tea and water — all served to seated guests by volunteers.

"A guest expressed, 'These people really care about us. We have real plates, real silver and real glasses to drink out of,'" said Martha McArthur, one of the two women at Twelfth Street Baptist heading up the ministry. "That really meant a lot to them."

Planting the seed

The seed for Taste of Hope was planted by a 14-year-old member of Twelfth Street — Bayleigh Garmon — who wondered why the church couldn't execute something similar to the soup kitchen where she had volunteered. McArthur and Joan Brown were tapped by the church to organize the program.

Both relatively new to Twelfth Street, the ladies had never even met each other before being asked to lead the initiative in early February.

"We were told that the church wanted to start a soup kitchen, and we'd been asked to head it up," Brown recalled. "We thought we'd start it in May but realized that Brother Craig [Carlisle, the church's pastor] wanted it to start much sooner."

Brown and McArthur solicited volunteers from the church to help and ended up with so many they had to convene in the sanctuary to meet with everyone at once. Of the church's 1,200 members, about 90 wanted to help out with the new ministry. Because there was such a huge team of folks to act as volunteers, Brown and McArthur were able to organize several teams to give people specific roles. Teams include a security team, a counseling team, guides, parking lot attendants, greeters,

people who set up and tear down the dining room, servers, dish washers, a promotions/marketing group, a decorating group and more.

"The people of the church have a heart to serve in the community," McArthur said. "In this area, the need is very great. There are many people [who] don't have a hot meal most days."

McArthur and Brown said the name for the ministry was developed by the volunteers and that there was an intentional goal not to include "soup kitchen" in the title. They want guests to feel special and to be seated at tables and then served in a clean space by kind people.

Carlisle said, "Our goal at Twelfth Street is to 'Be the Church': everyone, everywhere, every day.

Taste of Hope is an avenue through which that can happen. Our hope is that many other ministries will be birthed through Taste of Hope as we realize more of the needs of the people we are serving."

For now, the plan is for Taste of Hope to be open the first Saturday of every month, but it might become a more frequent ministry if the interest is there.

Looking ahead

McArthur said, "If the Lord continues to bless Twelfth Street, we know it's going to continue to grow and grow. Also we'd love to involve some of the other churches in our area so it can be a community-wide ministry."

Carlisle echoed McArthur's desire to extend the ministry to the local church community and is especially proud of how many people — regardless of age, experience with this type of ministry, etc. — are able to have a key role.

"The beauty of a ministry like Taste of Hope is that it is cross-generational," he said. "It involves families serving together. There is nothing more beautiful than when the body of Christ comes together across the generations and shares the love of Jesus." ❏



Photo courtesy of Martha McArthur
Joan Brown (left) and Virginia Palmer (right) volunteer with Taste of Hope Hot Meal Center at Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden.



Photo courtesy of Martha McArthur

Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, provides hot meals to people in the community through its Taste of Hope Hot Meal Center. The ministry was launched March 1 and fed 74 people on its first day.



BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTRY

Baptist Campus Ministries serve students at community colleges across Alabama

By Amy Jackson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Across the United States on most four-year college campuses, a variety of student groups and organizations regularly meet each week, ranging from Greek fraternities and sororities to religious groups to service organizations.

While community colleges, often attended by students who are in transition and from varied backgrounds, traditionally have a different atmosphere than four-year universities, that hasn't stopped Alabama Baptists from leaving their mark there.

Statistics show that many students leave their faith after graduating from high school, which is why Alabama Baptists believe investing in campus ministries is important.

Whether on a four-year university campus or at a community college, a focus on ministry to college students is vital to reaching the lost and discipling them in their faith journey, state Baptist leaders contend.

Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) has a strong and growing presence on 27 community college campuses across Alabama. Ministry looks different according to the specific campuses involved; BCM has had an active and involved presence on some campuses, such as Southern Union State Community College—Opelika, for a number of years. For other campuses, BCM is a recent addition. Such is the case with Wallace Community College—Dothan.

Shea Murphy, president of BCM at Wallace—Dothan, has been a part of the BCM on her campus since its inauguration this past year. She reported that more than 80 students at the campus signed a petition to have BCM there. Their outreach on the campus officially started in fall 2013.

While each campus' ministry varies accord-

ing to student population and demographics as well as tenure of the BCM, they all share the same mission: to involve students in regular Bible study and discipleship to help them develop their personal spiritual walks and equip them to reach their campuses for Christ.

While ministry is happening, it doesn't come without challenges.

Jake Duke, a campus minister serving at several community college campuses in west Alabama, including Alabama Southern Community College—Demopolis, Alabama Southern Community College—Gilbertown, Wallace Community College—Selma and Marion Military Institute, noted some of the challenges, which also serve as opportunities for ministry.

Many students attending community college have enrolled in school later in life to earn a degree, he said. Time also is a struggle for many students on a community college

campus because many are commuting to campus for classes while also carving out time for work, studying and family.

But despite these differences, "The students are still the students," Duke said. "They aren't any different. You just have to find different times to be able to reach them."

He spoke of a senior citizen in the past who had become involved with BCM and noted that her presence was a real encouragement to his students.

While not having a permanent building on campus can be difficult, some BCMs take advantage of creatively utilizing space offered to them by their campus.

Shannon Hughes, BCM campus minister at Southern Union State—Opelika and Auburn University, leads a Bible study in the campus' student union building each week and also fosters relationships on campus with the administration. Her colleague Steve Thompson connects with students by setting up video game consoles in the student union, where he engages with students every Thursday by



Photo by Chris Mills

Students gather at the Baptist Campus Ministries' worship service at Southern Union State Community College, Wadley, on March 17.

playing video games and having conversations in between their classes.

Though there are challenges, the joy of ministry and effects of evangelism and discipleship are evident in many reports from Alabama's community college campuses.

Eric Sexton, collegiate/student minister for Etowah Baptist Association and campus minister for Gadsden State Community College, described the fruit he has seen from students engaging in international ministry at Gadsden State.

"[Our] BCM ... has had a long-term relationship with the international program," he said. "We have three 'international welcome' parties a year ... [and we host] annual Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners so that our international students can experience a holiday meal."

'12 Weeks of Intentionality'

Several of their students also have committed to be a part of a program called "12 Weeks of Intentionality," where they challenge each other to have at least one spiritual conversation every week over the course of three months. The experience, according to Sexton, has been both challenging and rewarding, as he reports that "all of us are growing and learning about how to be more intentional [through this program], both in our walk with God and with the world."

BCM students at Southern Union—Opelika have likewise opened doors for conversation through the use of Soularium cards, which use images to start conversations about the gospel.

Murphy said the first BCM activity at Wallace—Dothan was one of service to the com-

munity. They offered water and snacks to participants of a breast cancer awareness walk.

Report after report of students who encountered the gospel through BCM's ministry on their campuses tell the story of the significance of this ministry and its place and purpose. There are countless examples of students who became believers through the ministry of BCM or recommitted their lives to the cause of Christ and have had tremendous impacts on their campuses as a result of these decisions.

However, the gospel proclamation is not merely contained to these individual campuses through the efforts of BCM; these seeds planted have the power and potential to reach the nations. For instance, Sexton shared that he has been meeting with a Nigerian student at Gadsden State who was recently baptized. Sexton said he truly believes "that BCM gives [this student] an opportunity to connect with students like him, and together we are all storying through the Old and New Testament. One day I believe he will take the gospel back to his home country. He can go through doors that I can't."

Ministry like this is made possible through the prayer and financial support of Alabama Baptists in cooperation with BCMs across the state.

"That's one thing I'm proud of Alabama Baptists for ... [being] willing ... to go where no one else is doing anything and to reach students where they aren't being reached otherwise," Duke said. "Thank you for supporting what we are doing and for having a heart to reach college students — not just at the 'big' schools but 'little' schools too." ❧



Photo by Angila Brannon

Kevin Cobb (right) talks to a student about BCM at the Wallace Community College fall festival. Cobb, who is associate pastor for Southside Baptist Church, Dothan, helped establish a BCM on the school's Dothan campus.



MINISTRIES

continue to make an impact across the state

Gadsden State Community College student shares what BCM means to him

By Myles Garrison, student
Gadsden State Community College

God is at work on the campus of Gadsden State Community College. I have been blessed so tremendously to be a part of the Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) here on campus.

The past two years of my life have been a clear awakening for me spiritually. My time as a college student has tested my faith and led to a healthier relationship with my heavenly Father.

The missions field here on the community college level does differ from that of the universities. In spite of not meeting in a BCM building, we are very fortunate to have fantastic relations with the college and make use of its facilities to house a weekly Bible study and discussion group.

One unique thing about Gadsden State is the large international student population on campus. Many do not own vehicles nor do they live off campus. The BCM has been able to form a strong relationship with the coordinators for international students. This relationship has resulted in opportunities to provide them with parties to welcome them as they begin the semester and as they depart at the end of the term.

This means a great deal to me and to the ministry because we have had personal opportunities to be intentional with students from all over the world who collectively speak more than 13 different languages. We recognize this as a wonderful opportunity to develop lasting relationships with students with the intentional mindset of sharing the message of Jesus Christ with these students.

In addition to our focus on the international students, we aim to not ignore our domestic friends here on campus as they need Jesus just as much as anybody. Working in conjunction with Etowah Baptist Association, we are able to present opportuni-

ties for local churches to get involved with what we are doing. One way this occurs is by having different churches provide free weekly lunches for college students.

God is always at work around us, and we anticipate exciting changes in the near future to allow us to minister differently on campus. Potential for outreach is limitless as long as we continue to humbly expect God to work in our midst and adjust ourselves to Him.

Through the campus ministry I have met numerous friends, mentors and international students. I have been able to form solid relationships with students, allowing me to witness to them. I love people of varying cultures and have been blessed beyond comprehension to meet and learn about them. Anywhere from playing soccer to having lunch with a young person who is learning the English language is just a taste of what my ministry here includes.

Please be in prayer for our college, our ministry and the overall mission of Christ pertaining to Gadsden State. I pray that the ministry here is not overlooked because of its "lesser" status in comparison to ministries on university campuses. Even though I attend a community college the need is equal to that of a university for the gospel of Christ.

Movements for change

History teaches us that oftentimes it is the youth who are heavily invested in global movements for change; especially those for the Christian faith. I would consider it foolish to overlook the chances that a student at a community college could very well change the world. Because of the international population here, the odds are even greater that a student could take Jesus Christ to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Getting more than a college education is our goal as the BCM here. 🙏



GARRISON



Photo by Angila Brannon

A meet and greet event was held at Wallace Community College–Dothan where nearly 100 signatures were gathered of students who want to see BCM launched.

BCM new to Wallace CC–Dothan

By Kevin Cobb, associate pastor
Southside Baptist Church, Dothan

In my role as associate pastor, I oversee the music, education and college ministries.

Until a couple of years ago if someone had asked me what BCM stood for I would have likely guessed Bicycle Chain Maintenance, though I don't know why. I had heard the acronym while a student at Troy University in the late 1990s and heard it mentioned at various Baptist conferences after surrendering to the ministry, but that was about it.

Then a little more than a year ago, I talked with some BCM (Baptist Campus Ministries) representatives while at the state Youth Evangelism Conference with our youth group.

It wasn't long after that discussion that Angila Brannon, a dear family friend who works in public relations and marketing at Wallace Community College–Dothan, asked me how to establish a BCM at their campus.

To say I was overwhelmed would be quite an understatement and, now that I look back on it all, to say I had very much to do with getting it started would be an overstatement. God blessed me by guiding me in contacting the right people, getting some great advice and having a lot of help.

Ryan Spry, director of student life for Wallace, was a big help. Carol Rich from the Sparks campus of Wallace helped guide me as well since she worked with BCM there. Jerry Grandstaff and Ken Farley from Columbia

Baptist Association gave me plenty of support and encouragement. Mike Nuss, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of collegiate and student ministries, came down and met with me to help give some direction and encouragement. Nuss also came to the meet and greet event, where we had nearly 100 signatures of students who wanted to see us launch a BCM.

Through countless emails and phone calls, we were able to get our paperwork in order and get approval to start meeting.

Shea Murphy and Davidson Grandberry agreed to be our first president and vice president respectively, and Brannon volunteered to be our adviser, so we have a great team in place.

Spencer Kalar is the president of another Christian group already meeting on campus called His Love in Action, and they have been very welcoming and cooperative as well, which has helped us get the ball rolling. We meet together with them

each Wednesday.

Though we are less than one year into the Wallace BCM, we have already started to see growth. It's exciting for me to see students taking initiative and stepping out to point their campus to Jesus.

We are being contacted by other students who have heard about BCM and have expressed interest in getting involved. We are excited about all of the ways God will use BCM at Wallace to make an impact on our campus, on our area and in the Kingdom. 🙏



COBB

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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BIGBEE

► **Brad Campbell** is the new director of missions for **Bigbee Association**.

He will begin April 1. Campbell will continue to serve as pastor of Siloam Church, York. He holds a bachelor of science degree in accounting from Livingston University (now University of West Alabama). He and his wife, Susan, have three children.



CAMPBELL

BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will hold a Good Friday service April 18, 7 p.m. with the Lord's Supper. Easter services will be the same time as normal Sunday services. Morgan Bailey is pastor. ► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will hold a special 5th Sunday night of music March 30, 5 p.m. with Earl Norris

(saxophone), Rachel Rowell (piano) and special guest Rick Roper (saxophone). Tommy Chesser is pastor. ► The Southcrest Gospel Singing Outreach of **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host The Campbells and the Scrap Iron Quartet on April 4. Doors will open at 6 p.m. and the singing will begin at 7 p.m. For information call 205-425-1794. Scott Bush is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham**, will hold a Secret Church gathering April 18, 6 p.m.–midnight (CT). The topic of this year's gathering will be "The Cross and Everyday Life," and it will be simulcast around the world. Secret Church began more than seven years ago with two main purposes: to worship through intensive Bible study and to identify with and pray for persecuted brothers and sisters throughout the world. Tickets for attendance on-site at Brook Hills have sold out, but registration for the simulcast is currently open through the Secret Church web-

site at <http://www.radical.net/secrechurch/>. David Platt is pastor.

► **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, will present "Saviour: A Modern Oratorio" on April 13, 6 p.m. in the sanctuary. Presented by the Dawson Sanctuary Choir & Orchestra, the time of worship will tell the "story of God's passion for His people." For information, call 205-871-7324. Gary Fenton is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Sardis Church, Boaz**, will host a simulcast April 5, 8:30 a.m.–4:45 p.m. featuring author and Bible study teacher Priscilla Shirer. There will be a one-hour lunch break at 11:30 a.m. For information call the church office at 256-593-7762. Mike Goforth is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Shoal Creek Church, Decatur**, will host Unspoken in concert March 30, 6 p.m. Gary Linville is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Taylorville Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold revival April 6, 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. and April 7–9, 6:30 p.m. Calvin Poole will lead worship and Matthew Kelley will speak. Curtis Kelley is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Tuskegee Lee Association** will hold a Senior Adult Spring Celebration on April 1, 10:30 a.m. The program will be provided by musician Derwin Hinson from North Carolina. Central Church, Opelika, will host the event. Lunch will not be provided. Bill King is director of missions.

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, *The Alabama Baptist*

Eileen Mitchell



MITCHELL

*Pinedale Baptist Church, Montgomery
Montgomery Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: Jeremiah 29:11–13

FAVORITE HYMN: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

HOBBIES: Reading, observing nature, singing

FAMILY STATUS: Mother, Kay Mitchell; sister, Beverly Hettle; three nieces; seven great-nieces and great-nephews

Eileen Mitchell, 60, has worked with Alabama Baptists for more than 23 years. The first five of those years, she served with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). For 18 years, she has been an associate in the State Board of Missions' (SBOM) office of Sunday School and discipleship, ministering specifically in the areas of senior adults, single adults and families. Recently she received the Adkins-Kerr Award for her contributions to ministry to senior adults. Mitchell has been the music minister at her church for seven years.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: Great pleasure in talking with senior adults and hearing their stories. I think one of my great skills is to connect. I like to listen.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: Prayer. My mother always prays for me. My sister is a good listener. My nieces pray. My church family is always willing to try things that I ask them to do. They encourage me because they are willing to try something new.

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

A: I hope that the Lord allows me to continue growing and learning new things and continue in this ministry. I hope I never lose the desire to learn something new or try new things. It keeps us fresh and excited about what we do.

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

A: I think I'll be better prepared for my life as I move into retirement because I still see senior adults active and involved in ministry. I've met a lot of people, my mother included, who still go to the gym, still sing in the choir, still active in church in their later years. In other words, there's no retirement, just a change of direction.

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

A: He saved me. I can't imagine life without Him. He has given me vast opportunities to minister because of my relationship with Him. I've been able to connect with missionaries, who minister in greater ways all over the world.

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

A: My parents, strong Christian home and growing up in the church. Also Sunday School teachers and choir leaders. But it started with my parents. I was saved in my home when I was 10 years old, talking with my parents in my living room. But it had been a process of Vacation Bible School, Sunday School and GAs. I realized my personal need for Jesus.

Q: When and how were you led into your ministry work?

A: I have always worked in the church in one way or form. I taught school for 10 years. When I was teaching school, I was asked to serve as interim children's minister. I was leading music at a single adult meeting in Oklahoma when I felt led to go to seminary. When you look back on your path, you can see how God uses the tapestry of your life. I led music at senior adult events when I was in high school. It's interesting to see how God gets you ready.

Kansas' Westboro Baptist pastor dies

Fred Phelps, founding pastor of Westboro Baptist Church, Topeka, Kan., died March 19 at age 84.

Known around the world for anti-gay protests by the small independent church Phelps started in 1955, reports recently surfaced that Phelps was voted out of membership after calling for a kinder approach among

church members as a male board of elders defeated his daughter, Shirley, in a power struggle.

The church's notoriety grew for its "God Hates Fags" anti-gay slogan at public protests. The congregation, comprised almost entirely of Phelps' extended family, claims to have engaged in 52,335 pickets in 922 cities. (ABP)



Photo by First Baptist Church, Alexander City

DEACONS EMERITUS RECOGNIZED AT FBC ALEXANDER CITY

First Baptist Church, Alexander City, held a deacon emeritus recognition service Feb. 23. Deacons recognized were (l to r): Neil Smith, Hugh Holley, Allison Blythe, Clarence Abernathy, Argus Brasell, Dan Miles and Harold 'Red' Lutz. Joe Turner is pastor.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Christ

Jesus: The Indwelling Christ

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

This week we continue thinking about Christ as the Word that is. He is not only the Word of proclamation but also the Word of personal experience.

While the Christian life begins with the incoming of Christ, it continues with His indwelling. The picturesque promise of Revelation 3:20 tells of Christ knocking not at a window but at the place of entrance — the door. He seeks not simply to look in upon us from time to time to see if we are doing the best we can, but to enter our lives. His intent is to indwell us and thus to be at home in the house of our hearts. When invited in, the visitor at the door becomes an indwelling guest who remains in our lives the rest of our days.

His desire is to eat with us

According to the word picture of Revelation 3:20, as a consequence of His indwelling, Christ wants to eat with us. In short, He wants to be the indwelling guest in life's ordinary, everyday moments, such as sitting at a table with us. Once He has come into our hearts, He never leaves us or forsakes us (Heb. 13:5). He goes where we go. He hears what we say. He is party to our thoughts. He sways with our emotions. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, the indwelling Christ is present as the heaven-sent Guest at

home in the house of our hearts.

As to the method of His indwelling, from His point of view it is by means of His earthly representative, the Holy Spirit. The Bible puts it like this: "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). From our vantage point, His indwelling is by faith. The prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 includes a purpose statement that reads, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (v. 17).

He seeks to become Host

Christ's indwelling also has a forward looking dimension. The fact of His indwelling assures our future glory. Colossians 1:27 speaks of "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Back to our present experience of the Word that is, the last clause of Revelation 3:20 suggests that Christ seeks to trade places with us. At His incoming, we are the host and He is the Guest. However, His design is not to remain a guest. His goal is to trade places with us. He seeks to become the Host as Lord of the house. After all, Christ is the builder and buyer of the house.

As such, more than eating with us, He wants us to eat with Him: "I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me." This last clause envisions Christ becoming the Host with whom we are invited to eat. And He knows how to prepare a table, even doing so in the presence of our enemies (Ps. 23:5).

He is prepared to nourish our spirits. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his young assistant, about how Timothy needed to be "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6). The apostle Peter admonished his readers that they should "desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). Might we not say with the hymn writer, "Feed me 'til I want no more"? ☪

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.



Carly's Law

Legislature approves marijuana oil research

Legislation that would fund a University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Department of Neurology study on the effectiveness of using cannabidiol (CBD) oil — a marijuana derivative — to treat severe seizures will make its way to Gov. Robert Bentley's desk to be signed. According to news reports, Bentley planned to sign the bill after his legal staff reviewed it.

Senate Bill 174 — known as "Carly's Law" and named after a 3-year-old Birmingham girl who experiences uncontrollable seizures caused by a genetic disorder — was passed by the Alabama House of Representatives in the early morning hours of March 20 by a vote of 97-0.

The state Senate then voted 27-0 later that day to agree with a minor House change to the bill, according to the Associated Press (AP), allowing it to receive final passage.

In its initial stages, the bill would have granted legal protection to families using CBD oil.

However, changes to the bill occurred when House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, involved UAB. The newer

version of the bill, which includes providing CBD oil through the UAB study, was initially unveiled March 11, all according to AP reports.

The legislation, sponsored by Sen. Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville, authorizes UAB to study the effects of CBD oil on chronically ill patients for up to five years, and the university would control and dispense the drug to participants in the study, according to the *Montgomery Advertiser*.

According to news reports, if the bill becomes law it would fund \$1 million to UAB for the study, which can't proceed

until UAB receives approval from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

In addition to Sanford, others behind the legislation include Rep. Mike Ball, R-Madison, a retired agent of the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, and Rep. Allen Farley, R-McCalla.

To contact your senator, call 334-242-7800. To contact your representative, call 334-242-7600. (TAB)

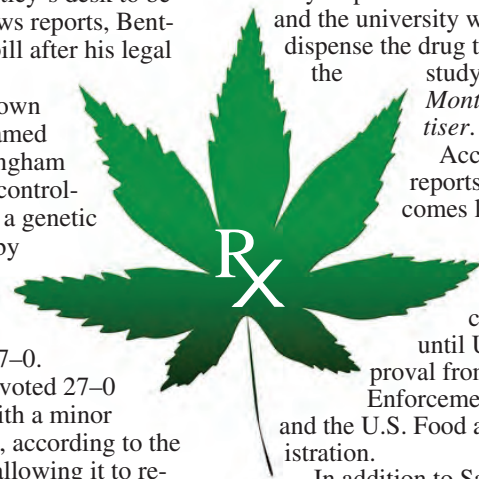


Photo courtesy of Chilton Baptist Association

CHILTON ASSOCIATION SENDS TEAM TO GUATEMALA FOR 8TH YEAR

Chilton Baptist Association sent a team of volunteers on a medical/evangelism missions trip to Guatemala for the eighth consecutive year from Feb. 26 to March 4. This year the team served in four towns in central Guatemala and treated 510 patients, visited 35 homes, distributed groceries and Spanish Bibles and saw seven professions of faith in Christ. The team consisted of Director of Missions Larry Felkins (back row, third from right) and members of First Baptist, Clanton; Friendship Baptist, Clanton; Maplesville Baptist; Mount Bethel Baptist, Clanton; Mulberry Baptist, Maplesville; and Union Springs Baptist, Randolph.

Working together

Atmore area churches endure storm, give thanks

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

A building's awning is typically thought of as a good thing — something that helps keep visitors protected from the elements as they come and go. But for Canoe First Baptist Church, near Atmore, its awning was the very thing that damaged its building March 16.

Winds that exceeded 110 mph blew through parts of Alabama, and Pastor Jake Bondurant said it seemed as though his neighborhood had withstood a tornado. His home, undamaged by the storm, is located behind the Escambia Baptist Association church.

Bondurant, who has served in his first pastoral role at Canoe First for about a year and a half, explained that an awning on the west side of the church was caught by the wind, crumbled and thrown into parts of the roof. The debris left gaping holes in multiple areas with the most severe damage occurring above the sanctuary and the education/youth area.

Around 8:20 a.m., Bondurant went to check on the building and it was raining heavily.

"Before I knew it 10 men were



Photo courtesy of Canoe First Baptist Church

Volunteers from the church and community help cover Canoe First Baptist Church's roof after a storm damaged it March 16.

there and started working. We had ladders, hammers and nails and tried to patch the holes. ... Sitting on top of a roof can bring folks together in a very special way," Bondurant said with a laugh.

Volunteering

It took the group (comprised of church members and a few community members) two hours to patch and cover the holes in the roof. And a few other volunteers

came in the afternoon to help clear debris. The church had recently revamped its insurance plan, so all the repairs will be covered, Bondurant said.

Church members gathered in the undamaged fellowship hall for Wednesday night services and plan to meet there for the next several weeks while repairs are made to the sanctuary and the roof is replaced.

Having never experienced anything like this before, Bondurant, a Florida native, said he's thankful the damage wasn't any worse. No church members were injured and most of their homes were undamaged or easily fixable.

Ironically an awning also was destroyed at Brooks Memorial Baptist Church, Atmore, the same day. Pastor Robert Heard said there also were a few shingles torn off the roof but overall there was minimal damage.

Two church members' homes had a tree fall on them so the association's disaster relief team removed the trees March 16-17.

Brooks Memorial Baptist members met at the church for evening services March 16 and had a "time of thanksgiving," Heard said. "There were no injuries or deaths (in the area). It could have been a whole lot worse."

Bondurant said he received encouraging calls and emails from Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), and Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for SBOM.

Bondurant said, "The whole state has been concerned for us; we're really thankful for that. They've been praying for us. It makes me really glad that I live in Alabama and work at a church in Alabama." ❧

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christians in Laos could be expelled for their faith

NATAHALL, Laos — More than two dozen Christian converts in a village in southern Laos could be expelled for their faith if government officials fail to keep local authorities from violating their constitutional rights, according to an advocacy group.

The Christians from eight families in Natahall village, in Savannakhet Province's Phin District, were told to recant their faith at the end of 2013, according to a representative with Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRF).

"The threats are very real. ... Officials are still intending to carry out the threats. The deadline for expulsion has passed," said the HRWLRF source, who requested anonymity. "Christian residents of Natahall village are fighting hard to keep their homes as well as their constitutionally guaranteed right to believe in the Christian faith."

Religious affairs officials from Phin District are holding discussions with the Natahall village chief, identified only as Amka, leaders of the local chapter of the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party and district police. However, the threat of expulsion has not been withdrawn, the source said.

More than 100 Christians slain in Nigeria

MANCHOK, Nigeria — Muslim herdsmen armed with guns and machetes launched attacks on three villages in Kaduna state March 14, killing more than 100 Christians and destroying homes, sources said.

Scores of the ethnic Fulani assailants simultaneously attacked the Christian villages of Ugwar Sankwai, Ungwar Gata and Chenshyi in the Kaura Local Government Area for about four hours, sources said.

Yakubu Gandu Nkut, chairman of the Zankan area chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), said a pastor's wife and her three children were among the dead.

"The unfortunate attacks on our communities has led to killing of more than 400 Christians," Nkut said.

Church buildings also were burned down by the herdsmen in Ugwar Sankwai, Nkut said.

In Manchok, where several Christians have taken refuge, Nuhu Moses of Chenshyi village told reporters the Muslim Fulani herdsmen killed about 50 Christians.

Egyptian Christian succumbs to injury after attack

BENGHAZI, Libya — An Egyptian Christian shot in the head by a suspected Islamic extremist in Libya on March 2 has succumbed to his injuries, family members said.

Salama Fawzy Tobia, 23, died March 15 in El Raey El Saleh Hospital in Samalut, Minya Province.

His family had transported Tobia back to Egypt after the Egyptian government, on a doctor's recommendation that he not be moved, refused to assist in returning him to his country. The injury to his brain essentially left him in a coma until he died.

On March 2 in Benghazi, Libya, at least one gunman ambushed Tobia while he loaded fruit and vegetables onto his produce stand. The attacker shot Tobia in the head and fled the scene. No one has claimed responsibility for the shooting, but suspicion fell heavily on the Islamic extremist Ansar al-Sharia militia movement, according to Egyptian human rights groups. ❧

REFLECTIONS

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A man holding a Crimean flag stands guard outside the local parliament in the Crimean capital of Simferopol on March 17.

God is in control

Russian Baptists respond to Crimean annexation, crisis in Ukraine

EDITOR'S NOTE — The Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists published this open letter dated March 13 in the midst of the crisis surrounding the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

Dear friends around the world: Today world society is divided on how to assess developments in Ukraine. One demands that we choose sides. But doing so means rejecting those people of good will on the other side of the barricades. At a time like this, we remember the words of Job 37:23: "The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in His justice

and great righteousness, He does not oppress."

God humbled Himself and accepted His undeserved reproach, torture and death at the hands of those whom He had created. He accused no one, even though He had infinite numbers of reasons, arguments, physical evidence and documents at His disposal. He condemned no one and did not label people as "friends" or "enemies." And God is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

He equally accepts those from EuroMaidan and those from the Regions, both within Ukraine and beyond. He accepts them all as His children. Let us not claim that God is on our side and against the others. God is above and beyond our



Reuters photo

petty preferences and loyalties. In the political sphere, God is not for one side at the expense of the other. We are not sure how to make it clear, but we want to demonstrate our love — and God's love — for those on all sides.

Humankind seems to be teetering on the brink of a disaster and is remaining unharmed thanks solely to the grace of the Almighty — even though some would claim that they themselves have guaranteed survival. But all the hosts of advisers, analysts, political forecasters and intelligence services cannot offer a thorough and objective overview of all that is transpiring. But we are very sure that Jesus Christ is our Lord and supporter, independent of that which occurs. He is in control of all that is developing in Ukraine, Russia and the entire world. It all happens "according to His will."

On earth, He chose the path of nonresistance to evil, of humility and patience. He loved and prayed for His adversaries. And His love is real and unchanging and can be experienced in that which transpires around us (1 Pet. 3:13-18).

No historical events can overcome the love of God. No "genetic" nor "national" memory can erase the result of the death of Christ on the cross. No propaganda, no science, no politics, no

economy nor army can change what the Lord said in His Word confirmed by His blood more than 2,000 years ago: "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." Each of us needs forgiveness from the Lord, and for that we must come to terms with each other, to forgive enemies. That is the only way Christ offers us to find peace and quiet in our homes.

Being able to forgive for Christ's sake means more than death on the Maidan, more than a treaty with Western Europe, more than a discount on Russian gas. It means more than billions of dollars from Russia or Europe, more than 45 acres of stolen possessions, more than \$40 billion stolen from a country. It means more than all dollars and euro added together. We must ask for forgiveness and also forgive. That is why we turn to our Heavenly Father and cry: "Have mercy on us, o God. Grant us the strength to ask for forgiveness from enemies and to forgive them in the name of Christ."

Our calling as Christians is to demonstrate the love of Christ and His forgiveness, especially when the world's conditions seem to exclude that possibility. And His solution to the current situation will be better than anything we could have devised through our

own efforts. Realizing that, we thank God for all that was and is, for "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Today we pray that God might bless the principalities and powers that He has ordained for our good, no matter where we are. We pray that we might not become the sons and daughters of violence, that we not become guilty of dishonesty, disobedience or insurrection, that all might be done for Christ and His glory. We pray that all that occurs in politics, economics and otherwise not take over center stage in our lives. We must dedicate our time to the most important task of all: preaching the gospel and praying for the redemption of the lost.

We pray today for the two fraternal nations of Russia and Ukraine and for peaceful resolution of the current situation. We pray for understanding among the political and religious leaders of our two countries as well as the entire world community.

May God preserve and protect us all.

Vitaly Vlasenko, director of external church relations Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists



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Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago March 1964

Brotherhood Convention: Randy Mears, member of First Baptist Church, Huntsville, was elected president of the state Brotherhood at its recent convention in Mobile. He also has served as local and associational Brotherhood president. Mears is a production control engineer with NASA in Huntsville. Among other officers elected were: Clarence Peacock, Hartford, vice president; and Traylor Gross, Greensboro, secretary. Those named pastor-advisers were: Earle Trent, Florence; Bob Marsh, Andalusia; and J. Drew Gunnells, Montgomery.

40 Years Ago March 1974

BMC Organization Names President: J. Reese Murray, a Birmingham attorney, has been elected 1974 president of the Baptist Foundation Service Corporation. The corporation was founded to plan for construction of housing for the elderly on behalf of the Foundation and the Birmingham Baptist Medical Centers. Other officers of the corporation are: Mrs. B.P. Bowden, vice president; Charles H. Ste-

phens, secretary-treasurer; and Tom R. Dougal, executive vice president.

30 Years Ago March 1984

State Paper Editors from Alabama: Six editors of state Baptist newspapers are from Alabama and were recently reunited at the meeting of the Southern Baptist Press Association in Orlando, Fla. The editors are James Langley from Opelika, editor of the *Capital Baptist*, Washington, D.C.; Jack Brymer from Birmingham, editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness*; Jack Harwell from Mobile, editor of Georgia's *Christian Index*; Hudson Baggett from Cullman County, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*; Bob Terry from Decatur, editor of Missouri's *Word and Way*; and Ellis Bush from Troy, editor of the *Penn/Jersey Baptist*.

20 Years Ago March 1994


Alabama Baptists Help Rebuild Homes: Nine Southern Baptists from Alabama were in Kauai, Hawaii, in February helping to rebuild 30 homes abandoned by contractors. The recipients of help were selected by Kauai

County and Baptist churches on the island. The volunteers did work not only for Baptists but also Buddhist, Catholic and Church of Christ members. All were over the age of 70 with nowhere else to go. Volunteers from Alabama were: Gene Carter, First Baptist Church, Auburn; Happy Cotton, Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile; Frank Nor-sworthy, First Baptist Church, Brewton; Joe Kerley, of Atmore; George and Evelyn Hocutt, First Baptist Church, Elba; and O'Neal and Jimmie Robinson, of Dothan. Most of the volunteers were retired contractors, engineers and architects who had done similar work in other countries.

10 Years Ago March 2004

Alabama Women's Hall of Fame Inductees: Nancy Batson Crews and Rosa Gerhardt were honored as the 2004 inductees into the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame on March 4 at Judson College in Marion. Alabama's first lady Patsy Riley served as keynote speaker. Crews, who died in 2001, was the first Alabama woman to fly military aircraft in World War II as part of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, U.S. Army Air Force. Gerhardt, a pioneer for women in the legal field, was the first woman in Alabama to serve as president of the Mobile Bar Association, elected in 1947. She died in 1975.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER:

Position will involve leading blended worship, directing and utilizing a praise band and directing the adult choir. Send resumés to: ATTN: Pastor, Camp Ground Baptist Church, 3898 Andrews Avenue, Ozark, AL 36360.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR:

Flatwoods Baptist Church in Northport, Ala., is seeking a bivocational music director who will serve the church by planning and leading our worship/music ministry. The music director will be responsible for coordinating with all the church staff in planning, scheduling and directing the music program and ministries of the church. We are seeking someone who is a talented and passionate leader to plan and conduct a God-inspired music ministry. Send resumé to: fwbcpersonnel@hotmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC:

We are prayerfully searching for God's direction in the leadership of our choir, praise team and congregation. We are blended in worship style. Experience preferred but not necessary. If interested, please send resumé to: Ryans Creek Baptist Church, 24849 Co. Rd. 222, Bremen, AL 35033.

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. www.meekbc.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC/CHOIR DIRECTOR:

Pleasant View Church, Foley, seeks a part-time music/choir director to work with choir and other musicians. Great opportunity for retiree or music student. Information at 251-943-1845 or pleasantview@gulfnet.com.

TWO POSITIONS:

Currently accepting resumés for bivocational minister of music and bivocational youth director, Sylacauga, Ala., area. Send resumés to: Committee, P.O. Box 2447, Sylacauga, AL 35150.

STUDENT MINISTER:

First Baptist Church, Locust Grove, is accepting resumés for a full-time student minister. The scope of the student ministry is grades 6-12. A complete job description may be viewed online at www.fbclocustgrove.com by going to the "Students" page. Please send resumé to: Student Minister Search Team, 2950 Tanger Boulevard, Locust Grove, GA 30248, or email: craig.bowers@fbclocustgrove.com.

STUDENT MINISTER:

First Baptist Church, Dothan, Ala., is seeking and praying for God's person to fill a student minister position for students in grades 7-12, as well as the college-aged students. If interested, please feel free to forward your resumé to our Youth Advisory Committee Chairman, Courtney Mann. courtneymann@fbcdothan.org.

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.

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Want to know God?

Pastor Chad Manion
Salem Baptist Church, Brundidge

My grandmother loved watching the game shows "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy." It was a tradition in her home to eat supper, watch the evening news and then stay tuned for those two shows. I became very good at solving the puzzles on "Wheel of Fortune." I was not very good at "Jeopardy." "Jeopardy," as you may know, is a game where the answers are given and contestants must "answer" with a question that corresponds to it.

As the father of four children, I get asked a lot of questions on a daily basis. In fact, my 2-year-old son is always asking, "What is that?" as he points to an object. Some of the questions in life have a simple answer. Other questions in life are not so simple. God must be a "Jeopardy" fan because He gave us the Answer to the hardest question we could ever ask — even before we ever asked it. The Answer is a person. His name is Jesus.

The Book of Revelation says that Jesus is the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world." This means that before you ever sinned, God had already provided your Savior. God knew the most difficult question you could ever ask would be, "How can I know God?" Throughout history, man has made many attempts to answer this question. All of man's answers involve some process we must go through in order to get to God. Every other religion emphasizes man's attempt to get to God.

Christianity is not a religion. It is a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus. God's Answer was to send His Son to us instead. He knew we could never get to Him on our own. That is why Jesus came into the world. He came to save sinners. You may be dealing with some difficult questions in your life right now. Some of them may seem impossible to answer. Even as a Christian, life can be difficult. Honestly God has not given us every answer to every question we may have. But He has answered the biggest one. He has taken sin out of the way so that we might know Him. Would you like to know God? His name is Jesus.

About Alabama

It's Really Not A Trivial Matter

By Jim Williams
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The other day, a colleague at Samford University asked me if Alabama's constitution is still the longest in the country, which prompted me to delve into that treasure trove of governmental trivia, "The Book of the States." It's one of my favorite reference books.

It turns out that Alabama's constitution, at 376,000 words, is indeed still the longest state-governing document. But that's not all I found. It is over four times as long as the second-place Texas constitution. And it is actually longer than the combined length of all nine other southern state constitutions.

If you want to understand why this is so, "The Book of the States" helpfully points to our 880 constitutional amendments. About two-thirds of those amendments are local in scope. Instead of creating a framework for the conduct of state and local government, our constitution is a hodgepodge of local exceptions that makes government in every locality unique.

For example, this year's Act 14-85 proposes a constitutional amendment allowing the Franklin County Commission to allocate some of its sales tax money to match certain kinds of transportation grants the county might receive from the state.

In other states, there might be standard procedures for managing local matters like this; but Alabama legislators, who are elected to make policy and oversee the state government,

spend a good deal of time and effort on such issues. Of course, every locality wants them handled its own way. And so it grows.

In addition to the hundreds of local constitutional amendments, the Legislature has passed more than 35,000 local laws. The state is only beginning to codify these Local Acts of the Legislature so that everyone can know what the law is in a particular county.

Attempting to modernize

The Legislature has set out to modernize the state constitution in a way that might end the proliferation of local amendments. A constitutional amendment proposed in the Senate would allow county commissions to manage some of their own affairs except where specifically prohibited by state law or the constitution. This concept was thought radical when first proposed in the constitutional convention of 1900.

And, 114 years later, the current proposal has yet to make it to the Senate floor for a vote, and only a few legislative days remain in this year's session.

That constitutional table in "The Book of the States" may seem like trivia, but doing something to reform county government in Alabama is really not a trivial matter.

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

Hobby Lobby CASE

Supreme Court grants extra time for hearing

(continued from page 1)

1993 to address concerns that the federal government needed to take greater pains to protect religious freedom.

If the government is going to tread on religious freedoms with a law such as the Affordable Care Act, RFRA requires the government to show a "compelling interest," and that there is no less burdensome way to meet its goal.

That compelling interest test could be a hard one for the Obama administration to pass, legal scholars on both sides agree, since it has given out exemption after exemption to those who say they would have problems complying with one portion or another of the Affordable Care Act.

Churches that object to covering birth control, for example, have exemptions. So do the homeless, and people who can prove it would be a financial hardship to comply. "It's hard to argue that you've got a compelling interest when you've exempted out so many people," Mateer said.

Exemptions aside, medical and public health experts see a compelling government interest in ensuring women's health through access to contraception.

Green is a Southern Baptist, grandson and nephew of Pentecostal pastors, a Sunday School



en.wikipedia.org

Hobby Lobby President Steve Green's path led straight up the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court to witness oral arguments in the case *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores and Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v. Sebelius* on March 25.

teacher for decades and leader of a business that has declared its Christian principles from opening day.

Gospel outreach efforts

Their family foundation's charitable gifts focus on gospel outreach efforts in the U.S. and abroad, contributing to the building of a dome for the Oklahoma State Capitol, and supporting social services such as the City Rescue Mission, a 640-bed homeless shelter in Oklahoma City.

Now the Greens' family foundation is building a Bible museum five blocks southwest of the U.S. Capitol to house an unparalleled collection of rare and ancient Scripture manuscripts: 40,000 biblical texts, artifacts and antiquities, from the most ancient manuscripts in Jesus' "household language" to Torah scrolls that survived the Holocaust.

It's planned to open in 2017 and research to choose a name is underway.

Just don't expect to see "Green" in that name.

"Our hope is that the Bible is the hero of the museum, not me, or the Green family," Green said recently in a phone interview from Egypt. He was traveling to Jerusalem and Rome as well to discuss possible exhibition partnerships (and take a side trip to climb Mount Sinai).

'Able to deliver us'

Lately it's the Book of Daniel that comes often to his mind. In Chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would rather face a fiery furnace than bow to an idol at the command of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Green said, "They told the king 'Our God is able to deliver us.'"

As he faced the white-hot spotlight of the Supreme Court case, Green said, "God has allowed us to take this stand. I don't want to be presumptuous to say this is God's will."

If the ruling goes against Hobby Lobby, "I don't know what we will do but I am sure what we will not do," he said. He will say as the three men told the king, "Even if God does not deliver us, we still cannot do this" (Dan. 3:16-18). (RNS, TAB)

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DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

The Executive Director-Treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union is responsible for promoting, planning, conducting and evaluating the missions mobilization, missions awareness, missions education, missions support and missions involvement among women, youth, girls, preschoolers and co-ed groups in Mississippi Baptist churches and associations throughout the state.

SPECIFICATIONS

Education: College: 4 years; Seminary: 2 to 3 years
Experience: Church/Denomination: 5 to 10 years

RESUMES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:

WMU Search Committee, Marion D. Duncan, Chairman,
277 Cambridge Drive, Starkville, MS 39759

RESUMES WILL BE RECEIVED UNTIL APRIL 30, 2014

'Accessible link to original'

Samford to display Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition

Samford University's library is hosting an April 11 presentation on The Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition as part of its "Live @ the Library" series. The limited edition manuscript will be on view at a reception and presentation at 6 p.m. in Harwell G. Davis Library. The event is open to the public.

Tim Ternes will present "From Inspiration to Illumination, an Introduction to The Saint John's Bible."

The Heritage Edition is a full-size fine art edition of the original Saint John's Bible, the first handwritten and illuminated Bible to be commissioned by a Benedictine Abbey since the advent of the printing press, according to Kimmetha Herndon, Samford's director of university libraries.

The original Saint John's Bible was commissioned in 1998 by the Benedictine monks of Saint

John's Abbey and University with a mission to ignite the spiritual imagination of believers throughout the world and to illuminate the Word of God for a new millennium. A team of scribes, artists and craftspeople in a scriptorium in Wales under the artistic direction of Donald Jackson worked on The Saint John's Bible for more than 13 years. Herndon noted that Jackson is one of the world's foremost calligraphers and the scribe to Queen Elizabeth II's Crown Office at the House of Lords in London, England.

It is through the fine art Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition that individuals and artistic, religious and cultural institutions can intimately experience and share the inspiration, according to Eric Hollas, deputy to the president for advancement at St. John's University.

"The Heritage Edition provides an accessible link to the original

artwork for those who wish to bring its beauty, spiritual and historic significance into their lives and the lives of others," Hollas said. "It is a work of art in its own right and ignites imagination as it imparts the word of God."

Special printing technique

Saint John's conducted a worldwide search for the finest papermakers, printing experts and binders to create a printed work worthy of the original manuscript, Hollas explained. The best archival-quality 100 percent cotton paper, fade-resistant permanent inks and gold and silver metallic foils have been used to closely approximate the look and feel of the original. The edition is printed with a special printing technique using ultraviolet light. Each of the seven volumes that make up The Saint John's Bible is approximately 2 feet tall by 3 feet wide when open and weighs between 13 to nearly 20 pounds.

Only 299 sets of the Heritage Edition were created, and Samford is the only location in Alabama to own a set. The set was donated to Samford in 2012 by Jeff and Lori Northrup, of Birmingham. All seven volumes will be on display before and after the presentation. (Samford)



www.saintjohnsbible.org photo
The Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition is a fine art reproduction of the original.

Book-Link challenges Alabamians to get involved

For more than 25 years Book-Link International, Inc., has collected and sent Bibles, hymnals and Christian study materials to school libraries and pastors all over the world at no cost to recipients.

"At the first meeting of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men in September 1986, the concept of Book-Link was discussed," said Book-Link director Olin Williams. "On Jan. 26, 1988 ... a Book Project Committee of six people was formed and recommended that a book project known as NFBEE BOOK-LINK (now known as Book-Link International, Inc.) be established."

Hal Buchanan was selected as the first executive director of Book-Link and, according to ministry records, the first shipment of books and materials was shipped overseas in July 1988.

Six requirements

Book-Link, which is based in Kentucky, requires six things to operate: prayer, Bibles, New Testaments, Bible commentary materials, labor and financial support. The ministry currently ships two, 20-foot metal containers of books per year to three countries.

"Baptists of Alabama, as shown through Book-Link, have great interest in evangelism and are very

willing to share with others materials to help them better understand God's plan for their lives," Williams said. "Book-Link International offers another way for churches to accomplish Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew 25:40 and Acts 1:8.

"We need for each Baptist church in Alabama to get involved in this ministry through areas mentioned above to the extent that a collection and shipping center can be established in this state," Williams added.

Donations may be sent to Book-Link International, Inc., 100 Book-Link Way, Eubank, KY 42567. (Laura Wilson, TAB)

Virginia's Alban Institute closing shop after 40 years

The Alban Institute is closing shop after 40 years as an independent consulting, educational and publishing firm catering to mainline Protestants, directors of the Herndon, Va.-based nonprofit announced March 19.

As of March 31, Alban Institute consultants will work either individually or under a new banner of "Congregational Consulting," board chair Case Hoogendoorn said in a letter on the ministry website.

Educational events after April

1 will either be canceled or transferred to another sponsor.

Alban recently sold its publishing program, which features authors including Peter Steinke, Roy Oswald and Diana Butler Bass, to Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, headquartered in Lanham, Md.

Founded by Mead

Founded in 1974 by Loren Mead, an ordained Episcopal priest and pioneer in congregational studies who authored

bestselling books including "The Once and Future Church," the Alban Institute emerged as a go-to resource on issues like conflict, transition and mission in congregational and ministerial life.

With the rise of other organizations offering similar services and changes in publishing, Hoogendoorn said the time has come for Alban's leaders to "embrace the kind of radical change that has been so successful for the congregations they counsel." (ABP)

Alabama updates

People, churches making news across the state

Morrison named Beeson distinguished M.Div. alum

Birmingham investment executive Gregg Morrison, who earned a Beeson degree in 1996, was named the Master of Divinity Distinguished Alumnus by Samford University's Beeson Divinity School on March 4.

Morrison, an executive with McDonald Group Inc., is chair of the steering committee for Beeson's Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity campaign. Beeson's director of external relations from 1996 to 2001, he is an ordained deacon and minister who teaches Sunday School at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

In presenting Morrison with the award, Carter noted he has known the honoree for almost 40 years.

"He was saved and baptized at Shades Mountain Baptist Church," said Carter, who served many years as pastor of Shades and now teaches at Beeson.

According to Beeson director of operations Jim Pounds, Morrison is "the consummate Beeson advocate," who has continually sought ways to promote the divinity school.

Morrison also holds an accounting degree from the University of Alabama, a master's in theology from Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., and a doctorate from Catholic University of America in Washington. (Samford)



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Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Move over multitasking; singletasking finally wins out

My sweet friend was more gracious than I deserved. She shrugged it off and said not to worry about it.

I had basically insulted her in a group message on Facebook; how could I not worry about it? It wasn't intentional and I certainly didn't mean it. I was trying to do too many things at the same time, and thus a reply to a message came out wrong.

The same thing happened during an in-person meeting recently. I was attempting to deal with a major organizational situation while rushing through the lunch meeting and making needed announcements. My friend and co-worker asked a simple question and the phrasing of my answer came out all wrong. It wasn't what I meant at all, and my dear friend assured me she knew what I had intended to say. But I was mortified that my words could have been extremely hurtful.

And there was the time I misread an email, leading me in the wrong direction with an assignment. It cost myself and others many hours of unnecessary work all because I didn't read the information carefully.

Again a mistake that happened while multitasking — doing the thing that I have taken such pride in since I was a teenager. I've always been able to handle multiple tasks at the same time, juggling lots of activities and making consistent progress on all of them.

In high school, I cleaned my room while talking on the phone. In college, I studied while watching friends play baseball. While on the missions field, I had friends help me with work projects so we could have "hang out" time without me having to lose momentum on the projects. And when a guy asked me out on a date, sometimes I would invite everyone else along who had mentioned doing something fun that particular week. That way I could spend time with everyone but do it all at the same time (true story that my husband of nearly 17 years

loves to tell on me — it happened on our first date).

Today I can answer email on my computer while talking to someone on my landline and texting someone else on my cellphone. That's right, I can carry on three conversations at the same time. Of course, you see where it has gotten me a few times!

I have been pretty creative with multitasking through the years, but I'm not sure that has always been a good thing. A recent conversation with my family ended with them all agreeing that I am not always fully present while sitting in front of them. They mentioned how I check my phone constantly for emails and texts. I may attend my nephews' birthday parties and basketball games, but am I putting my full attention on them and the day's activities or am I distracted by other things I'm working on at the same time?

Consequences

My sister-in-law, Amanda, mentioned a new trend she likes where a group of friends or family members meeting for dinner all put their phones in the middle of the table when they arrive at the restaurant. The deal is that no one is to touch their phone during the outing. The first person to give in and check his or her phone has to pay for everyone's dinner.

Accountability and consequences for breaking the rule — I like it. It is probably something I need.

Visualize an entertainer on stage spinning plates on top of poles attempting to keep them balanced. He adds another, then another, then another. He always seems to stop adding plates at some point recognizing his limit. We all clap in affirmation. Impressive indeed.

But when I think about it in more detail, I realize the fact that he knows his limits is what allows him to keep the plates spinning. I don't always know my limits and end up adding one plate too many. You can probably hear the plates shattering now.

I also realized that even though the entertainer manages to keep the plates spinning, he can never take his eyes off the plates nor stop tending to them. If he turns his attention anywhere else ... crash.

Instead of attempting to spin all the plates at once, it is better to take one plate out at a time, do whatever needs to be done, put it back in a safe place and pull out another plate and continue on in this pattern. Yes I know. All the males out there are rolling their eyes and thinking, "Well, duh! We've always known this. What took you so long to figure it out?"

And I guess in general men do have more of a handle on this than many women.

But at the same time I'm not describing being one-track minded to the point where you have to complete the entire project in front of you before you can even begin to think of another project or assignment. There does have to be an ability to ebb and flow between projects, assignments, relationships, work, home, church, etc.

Instead of multitasking — where we work on several tasks at the same time — we should manage our tasks — where we organize our tasks, prioritize them appropriately and focus on the one at hand at the moment — while also making the best use of all of our time.

My editor, Bob Terry, describes it as redeeming the time. If we are organized and prepare appropriately, then we are always ready to work on what's next and avoid wasting any segments of time.

I may always face the temptation to return to multitasking when life gets overwhelming, but the newfound freedom I've found in not multitasking is certainly addictive.

Because I can actually look away from the spinning plates now, I can see the big picture much more clearly (Matt. 22:37-40). The clarity forces me to think carefully before I agree to take on a new project (Col. 3:23). I can better judge the time I have and actually see the boundaries.

And think about the change a newfound ability to focus will have on my spiritual disciplines (Ps. 46:10). God is teaching me so much. I'm excited to discover what's next. 🙏

Rashional Extras...

Developing 'worship' discipline

One spiritual discipline I want to focus on this year is worship, in particular, corporate worship. Realizing that my private worship has a great impact on my public worship, I strive to keep my quiet times of worship fresh and alive. This has proved to be most beneficial in enhancing and deepening my public worship with God's people.

However, I want to take that worship to a higher level by being more focused on each aspect of congregational worship — the fellowship, praise, music, presentation of God's Word from my pastor and/or guest speaker, time of meditation, offering, the invitation, etc. My desire is to leave each worship service drawn closer to God and better prepared to step into the world with a "full tank" to be poured out in my daily walk for Christ.

Through the years (I am 63) I have noticed there are many factors that influence my worship in God's house, i.e. where I sit is crucial. Even the people that I am sitting around can either enhance or distract my focus. Another important consideration is my physical preparation the day before and especially the "unholy hour" before arriving at church. Even though I no longer have children to get ready each week, I have found other ways to be

stressed and unprepared spiritually on Sunday mornings. Trying to "cram" too many tasks before walking out the door is my No. 1 enemy most Sundays.

Another great impact is overnight guests — whether it be grown children, grandchildren, friends or other relatives.

Still the problems I encounter in worshipping are mostly due to my own lack of preparation. We have an amazing worship leader and pastor and I am most grateful to the Lord for His blessings on our church.

Knowing that I am not alone in wanting to strengthen my worship of our amazing God, it would be beneficial to hear how others deal with this vital discipline.

My plans are to do a word study on "worship" to determine what is pleasing to God. In addition I would like to read books written specifically for that purpose and would appreciate any recommendations you or your readers may have. I will also seek God in prayer and meditation for His direction to me personally.

Thank you for your inspirational articles each week. They are most helpful to me and to my Sunday School class as well.

An Alabama Baptist church member
Morgan Baptist Association

"We speak best when we speak out of lives that exemplify the truths we seek to communicate. Words of truth backed up by a life that lives the truth are infused with life-giving energy and power. Jesus put it like this: 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (John 6:63). Eloquent words without the power of a godly life become rather lifeless words."

Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Theology 101 column
Feb. 27 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*

"Don't allow something you can't control to control you."

Jared Coker
www.netminister.net
Gadsden, Ala.

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one."

Mark Twain

@edstetzer

"You can't love your neighbor well if you live an overscheduled life."



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 30

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

DON'T BE A SLACKER
**Proverbs 13:4; 14:23; 20:4; 24:30-34;
 26:13-14; 28:19; 6:6-8; 10:5; 14:4;
 21:20; 24:27; 11:24-25; 19:17; 22:9;
 28:27**

**Work Diligently (13:4; 14:23; 20:4;
 24:30-34; 26:13-14; 28:19)**

We live in an interesting time. It seems the work ethic of generations past is slipping away and being replaced with a culture less inclined to work hard. It is therefore important for modern Christians to ask what is the biblical approach to work? How should Christians act in modern society?

The Bible is clear it is the duty of man to work. In Genesis, God had Adam tend to the garden. Work then was not a chore as it is often depicted today. Today, after the fall in Genesis 3, work can be toilsome. Does this mean Christians should do what they can to avoid work? No; the Book of Proverbs shows what happens to those who shun work. In the verses for this section, it is evident that those who work benefit by reaping the fruits of their labor. Those who work receive payment in some fashion. Those who do not work suffer for their laziness. This is obvious in areas like agriculture, where one who does not plant or harvest will not have food. But it also has relevance for us today — think of an employee who does not work hard. He will likely not receive a promotion. Or think of the student who does not put in time practicing, studying or doing homework — he will likely not do well in school and then be at a disadvantage when it comes to getting into college or getting a job after college.

It must be understood that working hard does not guarantee success — if you are not good at math, working hard at engineering does not mean you will become a successful engineer, or if you are not a good artist, practicing countless hours does not guarantee you will be a great artist. But overall, the general principle the Bible shows is that those who work hard benefit. It must always be remembered though that the Christian

does not work hard so that he can receive an earthly reward. Paul shows us in Colossians 3:17 and 3:23 that Christians work with all their heart as working for the Lord because our inheritance is from the Lord. It just so happens that quite often, those who do work hard actually benefit here on earth as well.

Work Smartly

(6:6-8; 10:5; 14:4; 21:20; 24:27)

Hard work is for naught if the work is not done in a wise manner. A wise worker needs to prioritize. Proverbs 24:27 shows it is important to do the most pressing and important work first, then do the work that is not as imperative. Another important element of working smartly is knowing when to work and when to rest. Proverbs 10:5 shows a son who has his priorities backward. He should have rested so that he could do work at the appropriate time. While we saw in the first section that being a slacker is unproductive and unwise, being a workaholic is bad as well. God gave man the Sabbath — a day of rest — so that man could rest and recharge. People who are driven to work all the time will eventually burn out. God did not design us to work this way. God “took off” the seventh day to show mankind a model we are to emulate.

Give Generously

(11:24-25; 19:17; 22:9; 28:27)

Since we are to model God, we also need to extend grace to others. We reflect God when we show kindness and help others, even when they don't deserve help. The Proverbs are replete with verses about how followers of God should be generous to others and give to those in need. Proverbs 11:25 and 22:9 say those who give to others will be blessed. Christians should not interpret this to mean that if we give to others we will receive more money. That is not the point. We receive blessings in other ways, most notably by receiving the approval of God. We need to remember that God gives us wealth not for our own comfort, but so that we can be a comfort and blessing to others.

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

WORK YOUR PLAN
2 Corinthians 9:6-13

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about its participation in a collection being taken up among the Gentile churches to aid poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. In this passage Paul provided valuable encouragement for the Corinthian believers as they sought to complete this task of generous giving to which they had committed themselves. He urged the Corinthians to be cheerful, generous givers and assured them of God's participation with them in their efforts. Ultimately God Himself would be glorified and honored by those who were the grateful recipients of the Corinthians' generosity.

(6-7)

In 2 Corinthians 9:1-5 Paul informed the church that he planned to send Titus and two other Christian brothers (8:16-24) to Corinth in order to ensure the believers finished their giving before Paul arrived. This plan would afford the Corinthians the opportunity to fulfill their earlier promise to give and to do so voluntarily rather than under any pressure that could arise had Paul arrived before the gift was ready. In verses 6-7 Paul expanded his exhortation about the nature of the Corinthians' giving by further emphasizing the great importance and benefit of generous and voluntary giving. To make his point about generosity, Paul used an agricultural principle related to sowing and reaping. He said there is a direct correlation between the amount of seed sown and the resulting size of the harvest.

Paul also told the Corinthians their generosity needed to stem from a determination made by each person within his or her own heart about whether and how much to give. A person's giving ought not to be reluctant or driven by a sense of compulsion. Rather the giving should be voluntary and accompanied by a cheerful and generous attitude, “for God loves a cheerful giver.”

(8-9)

Paul noted that God was able to profoundly bless the Corinthians. In fact, He had blessed them with their “present abundance” (8:14). The Corinthians might not have been rich, but they had a relative abundance compared to the Jerusalem believers. God had blessed the church at Corinth with abundant provision so that the church could abundantly share its resources with others. And sharing with others would not diminish their own supply; God's ability to replenish resources ensured the Corinthians would always have “enough” (v. 8).

To add force to his exhortation that the Corinthians should abundantly share their resources with others, Paul quoted a verse from Psalm 112 (v. 9). Psalm 112 commends those who fear the Lord and delight in His commandments. The psalm suggests that God materially blesses those who fear Him and that in turn God-fearers give generously to those in need (Ps. 112:5, 9).

(10-11)

Paul told the Corinthians of God's ability and willingness to multiply their resources to make possible their abundant generosity. But God would not increase the resources alone. He also would increase the “harvest of [their] righteousness.” This suggests that God would in some way heighten the effect of the Corinthians' giving, so that their already generous efforts would produce an exceedingly fruitful harvest of relief and encouragement among the Jerusalem believers receiving financial assistance.

(12-13)

Finally Paul described three significant results that would flow from the Corinthians' generous giving. 1. The Corinthians' generosity would supply the needs of the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem (v. 12). 2. This generosity in turn would result in “many thanksgivings” being offered to God (vv. 11-12). 3. The recipients of the collection would glorify God because of the obedience and generosity of the Corinthian believers (v. 13).

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Rather give ___(s). (Luke 11:41)
- Crustacean.
- Like a ___ planted by the rivers. (Ps. 1:3)
- Roman numeral 52.
- Samuel answered, ___ am I. (1 Sam. 3:4)
- Saul came after the ___. (1 Sam. 11:5)
- Who will have all ___ to be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4)
- Grain.
- How ___(ble) are thy tabernacles. (Ps. 84:1)
- He shall give his ___ charge over thee. (Ps. 91:11)
- Meekness, ___ance. (Gal. 5:23)
- New. (prefix)
- Mouths.
- A cave.
- The flesh of the child waxed ___. (2 Kings 4:34)
- ___ not two sparrows sold. (Matt. 10:29)
- Eggs. (Latin)
- But seek not ___. (Amos 5:5)

Down

- ___ Mater.
- Property right.
- Chinese dynasty.
- He was moved with ___ against him. (Dan. 8:7)
- The vision of ___ the son of Amoz. (Isa. 1:1)
- Before. (poetic).
- And ___ brought forth her firstborn son. (Luke 2:7)
- Of ___ many books there is no end. (Eccles. 12:12)
- Sons of ___; Joseph and Benjamin. (Gen. 35:24)
- Belonging to Hezekiah's mother. (2 Kings 18:1,2)
- Kemuel the father of ___. (Gen. 22:21)
- Short for Abraham.
- Is not. (slang)
- To be prolific.
- The 23rd letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- Loiters behind.
- Good woman's name.
- The sons of ___ were sons of Belial. (1 Sam. 2:2)
- Let us ___ together. (Isa. 1:18)
- Nathan said to David, thou ___ the man. (2 Sam. 12:7)
- Though I ___ all my goods to feed the poor. (1 Cor. 13:3)
- Abalom had a fair sister whose name was ___. (2 Sam. 13:1; alt. spelling)
- Star of your god ___han. (Acts 7:43)
- Great Lake.
- Southward were Kabzeel, and ___. (Josh. 15:21; alt. spelling)
- Compass direction.
- Historical period.
- The fourth part of a ___ of dove's dung. (2 Kings, 6:25)
- Form of “to be.”
- Former serviceman.
- Me. (French)
- Madame Peron.
- Stadium cheer.
- Robberies. (slang)
- Sea eagle.
- Ambassador.
- Hear, O ___. (Deut. 6:4)

- Bezer, and Hod, and ___. (1 Chron. 7:37)
- Atomic Energy Commission. (abbr.)
- Out to the south side to ___eh. (Josh. 15:3)
- Solomon thrust out ___thar. (1 Kings 2:27)
- ___ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)
- They that ___ the righteous. (Ps. 34:21)
- I command you this day in mount ___. (Deut. 27:4)
- Jacob's third son by Leah. (Gen. 29:34)
- Peleg ... begat ___. (Gen. 11:18)

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The faith-based film 'God's Not Dead' released nationwide March 21 and features Kevin Sorbo ('Hercules,' 'Soul Surfer') and Shane Harper ('Good Luck Charlie,' 'High School Musical 2').

Standing up for Christ



Photo courtesy of Pure Flix Entertainment

'God's Not Dead' film highlights importance of strong faith, power of gospel

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While presenting a compelling storyline with great conviction, the movie "God's Not Dead" displays the power of the gospel by emphasizing the importance of standing up for Christ.

Produced by Pure Flix Entertainment, a Christian film company based in Scottsdale, Ariz., this movie opened nationwide March 21 and features a star-studded cast including Kevin Sorbo ("Hercules," "Soul Surfer"), Shane Harper ("Good Luck Charlie," "High School Musical 2"), Dean Cain ("Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman") and David A.R. White ("Evening Shade").

Reality stars Willie and Korie Robertson of the hit TV series "Duck Dynasty," along with the award-winning Christian rock band The Newsboys, make special appearances in the film.

Defending God's existence

The plot focuses on Harper's character, a college freshman named Josh Wheaton who is taking a philosophy course taught by Sorbo's character, Professor Radisson.

On the first day of class, the young college student finds himself at a crossroads after being required to sign a paper stating that "God is dead" to receive a passing grade. Refusing to sign the declaration, Wheaton is forced to confront another challenge in order to remain in the class and defend the existence of God in a series of debates with Radisson.

"My character, Josh, really goes through a journey where his faith, courage and reliance on God are tested," Harper explained. "At first, he thinks he might not deal with it and kind of turns away from it. As he is feeling convicted, he starts talking with different people who encourage him to stand up for what he believes to be true in the context of this classroom and in his life because God is very real to him."

As the research for this controversial presentation intensifies and spreads across the campus, a journey of spiritual awakening and soul-searching is revealed among several characters in surprising ways.

Unlike the characters they play in the film, Sorbo and Harper both grew up attending church regularly with their

family and committed their lives to Christ at an early age.

Sorbo still remembers the night he surrendered his life to the Lord while attending a Billy Graham Crusade in St. Paul, Minn. "My faith has always been part of my life, and I grew up going to a Lutheran church with my family," Sorbo said. "As I started entering my teenage years, I began to question things I was being taught but I was never a nonbeliever or questioning the existence of God.

"When I was in the seventh grade, I went to a Billy Graham event and I was really quite mesmerized by what he had to say," he said. "I went up afterward to meet with one of the counselors, then we talked and prayed."

On screen and off, Harper and Sorbo are reminded of the missions field that is before them daily and desire to use their platform for a greater purpose.

"My faith gives purpose for everything I do," Harper said. "Obviously you want to be successful to be able to make a living and do what you love, but it goes beyond that. I'm in the entertainment industry because I feel like it's what I'm called to

do. There's a reason behind it and a bigger purpose than just to make money or feel content. My work community and the city that I'm in, these are the people that I love and value. This is my culture and my community.

"It's not just a set and my co-workers for the day, these are people that God has allowed in my path — to share His love with, to serve and be a blessing to," he said. "My desire is to live for someone greater than myself and my faith in Christ alone brings value to everything in my life and is what defines me. That's a great inspiration to me and is invaluable to me."

Sorbo agreed, adding: "I'm happy to talk about my faith with anyone when I'm on a set. As I told some of

my atheist friends before, 'If I'm wrong, I've lost nothing but if I'm right, then I've gained everything.'

"I've been doing a lot of faith-based and family-friendly movies lately, such as 'What if ...' and 'Christmas Angel.' The purpose of being involved in these projects is to influence people who do not have a relationship with Christ, although they keep searching for something more to complete

their life. I want them to second-guess what they are looking at and thinking."

Both actors gained unique perspectives from their respective roles, which they hope encourage Christians to stand up for their beliefs.

"When I first received the script, I couldn't put it down," Sorbo said. "Because I'm a Christian and got to play an

atheist, I drew from the experiences and conversations that I've had with atheist friends of mine who I've had wonderful debates with through the years. I've also met a college professor or two in my life who had similar points of view and was very adamant about what his mindset was. I've heard stories from other people of all ages who have [run] into similar situations in college. This is not some fictional story going on here, but it's happening all around us so it's time to speak up and make people aware."

In addition to his acting roles, Harper also is an accomplished singer/songwriter and his song "Hold You Up" is featured in the film.

"I think that God led me to write this song specifically for the film, and the lyrics ended up having a huge impact on me and in the movie," he said.

Christ-centered love

Much like the character he plays in the film, Harper spends a great deal of time researching apologetic topics to further his discipleship. He approached the role as an opportunity to apply his personal studies in front of his peers.

"I'm a huge fan of people like C.S. Lewis and John Lennox," he noted. "If you're just informed and not loving, trying to beat people over the head with information, it won't get you very far. But if you are informed and you show Christ-centered love for others, then it can really spur on conversations to be more effective and provide opportunities for people to be more responsive.

"It all boils down to the Great Commandment: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And to love your neighbor as yourself,'" Harper said.

"I hope the film serves as an inspiration for believers to stand up for their faith, because the ones who are lost and searching for truth will always be worth the time, energy and resources to invest in and to focus our conversations on what will help them discover the assurance that is offered through salvation because of the promises proclaimed in God's Word." ❏

"I hope the film serves as an inspiration for believers to stand up for their faith."

**Shane Harper
actor, 'God's Not Dead'**



Photo courtesy of Pure Flix Entertainment

Grounded

by **FAITH**

'If Jesus can get through it, you can,' Thomas says

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Tony Thomas, armed with a pie pan or towel filled with shaving cream, sneaks up behind teammates doing post-game television interviews and smacks them in the face.

"Guys are surprised and the crowd loves it. Everybody is a good sport. Nobody takes it personal," said Thomas, who admits what goes around, comes around. "They get me when it's my turn."

However, Thomas has had his turn in the spotlight. He was the 2007 National Player of the Year at Florida State, Atlantic Coast Conference Player, All-American, All-ACC first team and a finalist for the 2007 Golden Spikes Award and Dick Howser Trophy. He batted a conference-best .430, led the NCAA in runs (91), doubles (330) and total bases (189). His on-base percentage was 1.25.

At age 10 Thomas became a Christian and was baptized. His great grandmother, who died in 2007, was a strong spiritual influence. He listened as she read the Bible, and when he left for college she gave him a prayer cloth that he keeps in his wallet.

When she died during his junior year at Florida State University (FSU), which was his last year there, he said, "When things look dark and gloomy, like there is no way out, something happens. It may be tiny but ends up being something big in the long run."

Thomas was the first player in FSU history to have 100 hits, 30 doubles and 30 stolen bases. He missed out on one accomplishment — a triple to hit for a cycle and got tagged out at third.

Gaining confidence

"My coach told me to get down, and I tripped and fell flat on my face. I could have easily slid and been safe," he said. "Being known as the best college player was a great accomplishment," he added. "A lot of people said I wouldn't amount to much in baseball."

When Thomas realized he could do what others said he couldn't, his confidence spiked.

"Baseball is a game of failure. Adversity is put up against you. The main thing is overcoming adversity and not accepting failure," he said.

Drafted in the third round of the 2007 First Year Player Draft by the Chicago Cubs, Thomas has been an all-star in the Florida State League with the Daytona Cubs and the Southern League with the Ten-

nessee Smokies. Thomas led Daytona to the 2008 Florida State League championship and was named series MVP after hitting .483 (14 of 29), a homer, eight RBI and scoring nine runs.

In 2009, Thomas played for the Smokies and slammed 11 home runs and was an all-star.

"Thomas was even-keel and upbeat, the whole team fed off that," said Brandon Guyer, a former Smokies teammate. "Every ball he hit was on the barrel. For a second baseman he had a lot of power

and speed. He brings a lot to the table."

In 2010, Thomas led Southern League second basemen in fielding percentage (.973), was second in league triples (11) and fourth in slugging percentage (.485). Tennessee finished as league runners-up both seasons to Jacksonville. Thomas was an MiLB.com organization all-star. By February 2011 he was traded to the Boston Red Sox and played for the minor league baseball affiliate, the Pawtucket Red Sox. And on Feb. 10 of this year he signed a minor league contract with the Minnesota Twins.

Thomas has relied on his faith to persevere.

"The whole Christian faith is putting up against adversity," he said. "It shows if Jesus can get through it, you can."

Baseball chapel is part of his lineup every Sunday

as a professional. He talks with teammates about faith.

"I'm not shy about letting people know where I stand and what I believe," said Thomas, who grew up in Tampa, Fla., and was a member of First Baptist Church, Progress Village.

He has played for the Pawtucket Red Sox in the International League and Portland, Maine, in the Eastern League since joining the Red Sox. A key to his success has been strong defense at second base. He also has played left field and has worked on his approach at the plate.

"I am not too worried about numbers but quality at-bats where I hit the ball hard," he said. "I am going to try to do whatever it takes to succeed. Everybody is trying to become the best. I keep a level head — I make sure I am not conceited if I am doing well, my head does not get too big. I know a lot of guys who have made it and it shows me I can."

At 27, he is on-deck for his next career chapter. "Baseball is America's pastime. I love playing it," Thomas said. "I don't regret any decision I have made. I am happy where I am, and I like where I am going." ❧



Photo by Jillian Souza

Tony Thomas runs the bases for the Pawtucket Red Sox during last year's baseball season.

RELIGION
in America

Compiled from Wire Services



Driscoll apologizes for missteps, quits social media

SEATTLE — Seattle megachurch pastor Mark Driscoll has written a letter to his congregation to explain recent controversies, including the marketing campaign intended to place the book, "Real Marriage," on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

Driscoll has been an influential pastor within Reformed evangelical circles for several years, helping to found a church-planting network called Acts 29. His own Mars Hill Church attracts some 14,000 people at 15 locations in five states each Sunday.

In recent months, however, reports have emerged that Driscoll plagiarized some of the material in his books. And earlier in March, *World* magazine reported that Driscoll hired a firm to buy copies of the book he penned with his wife, Grace, so that it would top the best-seller lists.

In a letter posted on Reddit on March 15, Driscoll apologized for using the marketing strategy.

"I am sorry that I used this strategy and will never use it again," he wrote. "I have also asked my publisher to not use the '#1 *New York Times* bestseller' status in future publications and am working to remove this from past publications as well."

The church's spokesman, Justin Dean, confirmed that a letter from Driscoll to Mars Hill Church was posted to the church's internal network as "a private family communication."

In the letter, Driscoll said he would quit social media for the rest of 2014 to "reset" his life.

He said he will not do as many speaking engagements in the future. "I don't see how I can be both a celebrity and a pastor, and so I am happy to give up the former so that I can focus on the latter," he wrote.

Bill Gothard resigns following abuse allegations

OAK BROOK, Ill. — Bill Gothard, an Illinois-based advocate for home schooling and conservative dress who warned against rock music and debt, resigned from the ministry he founded after allegations of sexually harassing women who worked at his ministry and failing to report child abuse cases.

Gothard's resignation from the Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP), according to a letter sent to families affiliated with the ministry he founded, comes after he was put on administrative leave. According to an organizer involved in the whistleblowing website Recovering Grace, 34 women told the website they had been sexually harassed; four women alleged molestation.

Gothard told the board of directors he wanted to follow the New Testament command to listen to those who made accusations against him, according to an email sent from David Waller, administrative director of the Advanced Training Institute (ATI) to families involved in the ministry.

"To give his full attention to this objective, Mr. Gothard has resigned as president of the Institutes in Basic Life Principles, its board of directors and its affiliated entities," Waller's email said.

Waller said the two institutes will continue under interim leadership, including upcoming conferences in Nashville and Sacramento under ATI president Chris Hogan.

Mormon women may be shut out of Temple Square

SALT LAKE CITY — Mormon women seeking tickets to the faith's general priesthood session in April will not only be denied access to the all-male meeting but also may be shut out of Salt Lake City's historic Temple Square altogether.

On March 17, the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) formally rebuffed Ordain Women's second push for entrance to the priesthood session and urged the grassroots group to "demonstrate" instead in "free-speech zones adjacent to Temple Square, which have long been established for those wishing to voice differing viewpoints."

LDS officials also are barring news media cameras from the square during their two-day general conference, which the church said is "consistent with long-standing policy."

Church spokeswoman Jessica Moody wrote a letter March 17 to the group's organizers inviting women to "view the live broadcast of the priesthood session on lds.org, the Mormon Channel or BYUtv." In fall 2013, the LDS Church broadcast the all-male meeting live for the first time. ❧