

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



May 22, 2014
Vol. 179, No. 21

Reporting. Connecting. Inspiring.

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

INSIDE



Task force releases report on declining baptisms in Southern Baptist churches

◆ Page 3



SBC Preview: Baltimore to host upcoming 2014 SBC annual meeting June 10-11

◆ Pages 4-5



Ukrainians glad to see Montgomery's Vaughn Forest missions team

◆ Page 11

MEMORIAL DAY

MONDAY, MAY 26

Military chaplains help channel grief of those who lost loved ones

Seated at a table with other chaplains who have comforted grieving military families, retired Army Chaplain John Schumacher held the red rose in his hands before he passed it along, pausing to remember those who had died on the battlefield.

Schumacher then took the rose and added it to a memorial wreath. Two days later, he and another chaplain placed the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery.

"I've been in combat. I've been with a lot of wounded men. I've been with dead men who were my friends," said Schumacher, a two-tour Vietnam veteran. "Chaplains give so much and carry all that pain with them for so long. It was such a tremendous honor to feel some of that pain kind of ooze out a little bit."

The memorial ceremony, organized for the first time by the National Association of Evangelicals Chaplains Commission, gave chaplains, who usually help others grieve, a chance to grieve themselves.

This often-unspoken need is now being addressed across the country, with



commons.wikimedia.org

A visitor touches the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington.

new training and a greater emphasis on mentoring. As these initiatives take hold, chaplains working in the military, hospitals and hospice are finding ways to cope.

Valerie Storms, president of the Association of Professional Chaplains, said

many chaplains' organizations tell chaplains to take care of themselves as well as others. Self-care ranges from knowing a chaplain they can contact on the spur of the moment to developing hobbies — from running to making jewelry — to maintain their spiritual and emotional equilibrium.

And there also are those working to help chaplains recognize and improve the ways they deal with grief.

Later in 2014, the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School in South Carolina will introduce a new training session developed by the University of Georgia that includes "secondary traumatic stress" among chaplains and grief counselors. The Army's chief of chaplains has encouraged a "Care to Caregiver" initiative that matches retired chaplains to serve as mentors to younger chaplains.

Chaplain Milton Johnson, a soldier and family minister at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, said he relies on fellow chaplains, his wife and pastors to help him channel his grief — including when he lost his running buddy to suicide.

But he said the new initiatives put a

(See 'Care,' page 7)



Faith and Family

Protecting from porn

Coming next week...

COMMENT

The Loved Ones Left Behind

Once each year our nation pauses to reflect and give thanks for those who have died. Officially Memorial Day is a time to remember those who died in military service to the nation. All who enjoy the blessings of the United States of America are indebted to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in service to the country.

The day pays tribute to those who died, but it does little to deal with the pain and suffering of the loved ones left behind. Whether death comes from military combat, some dreaded disease or an unexplainable accident, the physical, emotional and mental pain of loved ones left behind is real and overwhelming. Some have even said it is easier to die than it is to survive the death of a loved one.

In the shock of grief one often protests “I don’t deserve this” or asks, “Why me?” But who deserves to die from whatever cause? Yes some people live better moral lives than others, make more civic contributions than others, live more lovingly than others. But do those qualities entitle one to live while another dies?

After my late wife Eleanor died I was talking with a friend whose wife had died just two weeks earlier. This wise friend said the only answer to the “why” questions was “why not.” What was there about Eleanor and me or him and his wife, or about anyone for that matter, that was supposed to keep them from harm or even death?

Sometimes Christians act like they have made a contract with God. Christians will worship God and in return, God will safeguard them from all the bad things that happen in the world. Unfortunately that is not what the Bible says.

God is with us

In Psalm 23 God promises to be with the believer even “in the valley of the shadow of death.” He never promises to keep the believer out of that valley. Jesus’ last words to the disciples according to Matthew’s Gospel ended with the promise to be with them “even until the end of the age.”

The apostle Paul wrote, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38–39).

Pain, suffering and death are part of life’s experiences. And in the midst of it all the believer is never alone. God is with us.

The mystery of God’s presence in the midst of suffering has produced a number of explanations. Each contains truth but the whole truth still remains beyond the grasp of humanity. An explanation that has been helpful to me rests on the doctrine of free will. As the Baptist Faith and Message says, mankind “was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice.” Just as man freely chose to sin against God and brought sin into the world, mankind continues to misuse that freedom. The consequences of man’s choices are no more God’s fault than sin coming into the world can be laid at God’s feet.

Man is responsible for his choices and those choices sometimes impact others, even the innocent. The only way to prevent that is to remove free will.

A second explanation points to the spiritual growth that can result from suffering. The writer of the Book of James begins his letter with that premise. In James 1:2–3, the author writes, “Consider it pure joy my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”

The apostle Paul developed that theme in Romans 5:3–4 when he wrote, “But we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

At the end of World War II, Corrie ten Boom, whose family helped save many Dutch Jews

from Nazi concentration camps, uttered the often-quoted phrase, “You may never know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.” There is no denying that suffering can help grow one’s relationship with God. Who has not walked through hard times only to look back and realize how much one learned during the struggle?

Some Christians find their explanation of God’s presence in the midst of suffering by focusing on the will of God. This explanation focuses less on free will and more on divine purpose. The apostle Paul shares in 2 Corinthians 12:7 that he pleaded with God to take away his “thorn in the flesh” or end his suffering.

The answer the Spirit gave was, “My grace is sufficient for you for My power is made perfect in weakness” (v. 10). As with Job of the Old Testament, God had a higher purpose for Paul’s pain than Paul could understand. And God has a purpose for events in human life that may never be understood this side of heaven.

Carrying out burdens

A fourth explanation avoids the “why” question altogether. Instead of trying to answer the question about why bad things happen to good people, this path emphasizes God’s presence in the believer’s life no matter what happens. The Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus in John 14, will not leave us comfortless (v. 18) but will be with us forever (v. 16).

Just as Jesus wept over the death of His friend Lazarus, so Jesus weeps for the suffering experienced by any of His children. He helps us carry our burdens through the presence of His Holy Spirit. His strength enables the believer to focus on God’s grace rather than on one’s problems.

Again all of the explanations are true. One’s decisions can have rippling effects that touch countless others. Suffering does change us. God is ultimately in control and God is always with His people. Yet none of the explanations are totally satisfying and the mystery of suffering and death remain.

Because now we do “see through a glass darkly” it is important to emphasize what we do know. One thing we know is the nature of God is not determined by human circumstances. God is always good. At all times and in all circumstances, God is always good. God is just as good when the doctor’s report breaks our hearts as He is when the results bring us joy. In the midst of loss and in the midst of suffering God is still good. That was made clear when Jesus paid the price for our sin and made it possible for all who believe in Him to be reconciled to God. The God that demonstrated His love for us in Jesus Christ is the same God who will not let us go. That is something to hold onto in the midst of the trauma of losing a loved one. 🙏

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

BAPTIST NAME CHANGE

The editorial based on a speech by our Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President and CEO Frank Page was splendid. (See “SBC Executive Committee

Proposal Needs More Work” in the May 1 issue. It addresses a proposed amendment to Article III of the SBC constitution, which deals with how a church qualifies to participate in SBC life). My hope is that you will print the entire speech. And please

tell me: What became of “Great Commission” Baptists? Melvin G. Cooper
Prattville, Ala. 🙏





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

**PRINT
SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
Church Budget — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

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

**DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR**

Jennifer Davis Rash
Executive Editor

Neisha Fuson
Editorial Assistant
for Online Communications

Julie Payne
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

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

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

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

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

**Full member of
Alabama Press Association**

**'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'**

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008,
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013
as judged by Associated
Church Press, Evangelical
Press Association or Religious
Communicators Council

'Wake up call'

Task force releases report on declining baptisms in Southern Baptist churches

A task force designed to address declining baptisms among Southern Baptist churches released its full report May 12. An urgent, immediate call for spiritual renewal and personal commitment to evangelism and discipleship are the common threads among five recommendations made by the Pastors' Task Force on Evangelistic Impact and Declining Baptisms. The national task force, aimed at addressing the continued decrease in baptisms among Southern Baptist churches, was convened last year by the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Most task force members are pastors, including Alabama Baptist Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

"Southern Baptists' downward spiral in baptisms is the fruit of our spiritual lukewarmness," said task force member Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla. "I am greatly encouraged by the stirring I see among us toward spiritual awakening and the need for the resurgence of the Great Commission. This task force work and report gives me hope."

The group was formed, in part, because the 2012 Annual Church Profile reported a drop of 5.52 percent in the number of baptisms in Southern Baptist churches, confirming a two-decade downward trend.

Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), noted baptisms in Alabama have reflected the downward trend as well.

Gilbreath said he has great respect for the task force members and knows they did extensive study on the topic. He added it's encouraging "that we finally admit that baptisms have been on the decline. I pray that this recognition will cause us to place evangelism back on the front burner and realize that without intentional evangelism we get unintentional universalism."

Recognizing the issue

Al Gilbert, vice president for evangelism at NAMB, facilitated the group's meetings. LifeWay Research president Ed Stetzer assisted the task force with research support.

"Recognition and ownership of the issue are keys to reversing the decline," Gilbert said.

The task force identified five key areas, described as problems, that pastors and churches must address to reverse the baptism decline:

► **Spiritual** — "With urgency, we must join together in fervent and effective prayer for

spiritual awakening in our churches and our nation."

► **Leadership** — "As pastors we must intentionally model and prioritize personal evangelism while providing clear pathways for our congregations to follow."

► **Disciple-making** — "As pastors we must create a disciple-making culture — focusing on multiplying disciples who know how to grow in Christ and lead others to Christ."

► **Next generation** — "As pastors we must leverage our influence, activity and resources to reach and make disciples of the Next Generation."

► **Celebration** — "As pastors we must celebrate new life in Christ as people publicly profess their faith through baptism. We must establish an ethos of joy that celebrates the practice of personal evangelism and its fruit."

Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church, which topped baptisms in Alabama in 2013, said, "The task force committee did

an excellent job of not only identifying the problems but more importantly laying out a clear plan to answer those problems."

"The answer begins with the pastor," Hamm said. "He is the shepherd that God has placed over the congregation. The pastor cannot expect out of his people what he is not doing himself. I often say, 'I cannot give away what I don't have and I cannot lead my people to a place that I have not been.'"

Hamm added that many first reactions to disappointing news is hopelessness.

"Depression and discouragement is not the answer. We must refocus our attention on God and God alone," he said. "As long as we have breath in our lungs there is hope for a turnaround in our nation, and that turnaround begins in the church house not the White House. We must become intentional about addressing each of the five targeted areas (in the task force report)."

Task force member Manpoong "Dennis" Kim, pastor of Global Mission Church in Silver Spring, Md., said, "I am grateful for this endeavor's commitment to renew the passion for evangelism that ultimately begs the question, 'How then should we proceed?'"

From 1950 to 2011 Southern Baptists baptized an average of 379,711 people annually. Only twice during that time did the numbers dip more than 10 percent below that average. But in 2012 the decline was 13 percent off the average — the worst drop in 62 years.

The report itself takes an even more sobering view of the issue. The report states: "SBC

[Southern Baptist Convention] baptisms reached a plateau in the 1950s, peaked in the 1970s and have stayed fairly constant since that time ... The problem is even greater than these numbers indicate.

Considering how the North American population has increased substantially between the 1950s' baptism peak and today, these figures indicate how much ground we have lost and are losing."

Hamm noted the task force report should be a "wake up call to all of us. We are in a desperate need of revival, and I'm not just talking about a series of meetings. I'm talking about a sin-repenting, life-altering, city-changing, nation-awakening, church-shaking revival. We need a mighty move of God."

Personal statement of action

Gilbert said, "The recommendations are unanimous, but more than that, these men have made this a personal statement of action and they are hopeful that every pastor will review the list and see if they can identify with it. Our hope is that pastors will join us to make these recommendations personal and take action to affect change."

As part of assisting Alabama Baptist churches through the SBOM evangelism office, Gilbreath noted the 10-year "GPS" (God's Plan for Sharing) evangelism strategy.

"We have adopted (that) strategy ... recommended by the North American Mission Board and our State Board of Missions," he reported. "We have had great buy-in and participation from our churches and associations.

"My prayer is for every believer in Alabama to pray, 'Lord give me a new burden for the lost and don't let us lose Alabama on our watch.'" (BP, TAB)

Alabama Baptist 
GIVING

Year to Date through April 30, 2014

APRIL

CP Challenge Budget Goal \$3,475,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts..... \$3,858,844
Over Goal for Month..... \$383,844

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal \$13,900,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts..... \$13,939,707
Over Goal for Year..... \$39,707

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

Alabama's Hunt to speak at WMU annual meeting

Alabama Baptist Rosalie Hunt will be a featured speaker at the national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Missions Celebration and annual meeting. The event — with the theme Go Forward — will take place June 8–9 in Baltimore, Md., prior to the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) annual meeting.

Debby Akerman, president of national WMU, said, "What better place to wrap up a yearlong celebration of the 125th anniversary of WMU than the home of Annie Armstrong?"

"As we gather in June, we will embrace Annie's challenge to 'go forward' with missions as we celebrate how God is working around the world and through WMU, and renew our commitment to advancing missions education and involvement," she said.

Commissioning service

The celebration will feature an opportunity June 8 to experience a joint commissioning service of nearly 100 field personnel representing the International Mission Board (IMB) and North American Mission Board (NAMB), along with messages from Frank Page, SBC president and CEO; Kevin Ezell, NAMB president; Tom Elliff, IMB president; and national WMU leaders. The commissioning service will be in the Baltimore Convention Center Ballroom at 4 p.m.

Wanda S. Lee, executive director of national WMU, said, "Commissioning missionaries for special service is a great privilege. It is a time to celebrate their calling, voice our affirmation and

prayers as we hear their testimonies and commit ourselves to 'hold the ropes' prayerfully and financially

as they go. We invite everyone to join us and be a part of the commitment, prayer and excitement as these follow the Lord's call to their place of service."

On June 9 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at the Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel, participants will hear from a variety of IMB and NAMB personnel, including Taylor Field, a NAMB LoveLoud missionary who serves at Graffiti Center in New York City.

That same day participants will have the opportunity to take an afternoon bus tour of places Annie Armstrong lived and served in Baltimore.

The last session of the WMU Missions Celebration will be June 9 at 7 p.m. and will include messages from IMB personnel and Hunt, a board member of *The Alabama Baptist* and recording secretary for national WMU, as well as the election of new officers. (WMU)

For more information, visit wmu.com/baltimore.



BP photo

'Restoration & Revival'

Baltimore to host upcoming 2014 SBC annual meeting June 10–11

With a desire to keep the focus on the power of revival and prayer, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter Jr.

expressed excitement about the 2014 SBC annual meeting June 10–11 in Baltimore, Md. Messengers also will elect a new president as Luter wraps up his second term.

Pointing to the annual meeting theme, "Restoration and Revival through Prayer," Luter noted the return of a Tuesday evening revival service — similar in style to 2013's — that has drawn positive feedback from participants.

"I wanted to again stay with the theme revival, but let's undergird it with prayer," said Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, La. "Last year in Houston ... it was phenomenally successful. It was standing room only. ... All we had was music and preaching."

Luter selected the theme verse Psalm 80:18–19: "Then we will not turn away from You; revive us, and we will call on Your name. Restore us, Yahweh, the God of Hosts; look on us with favor, and we will be saved."

As the first-ever African American to lead the SBC when he was elected in 2012, Luter will give his last message to the convention as SBC president June 10. Luter also will address associational leaders June 6 at a banquet at the Inner Harbor Holiday Inn.

Tickets are available at www.sbcal.org.

Also at the annual meeting, the SBC's Executive Committee (EC) will consider a proposal June 9 to update the SBC constitution regarding qualifications for churches to send messengers to the annual meeting.

During its Feb. 17–18 meeting in Nashville, the EC decided to place the item on its June 9 agenda prior to the SBC annual meeting in Baltimore to allow Southern Baptists time to discuss the proposed change and provide feedback.

The committee's deliberations, then, will determine whether the proposed revision will be presented to messengers during the annual meeting.

Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd was the only announced nominee for SBC president at press time.

Floyd has led Cross Church in northwest Arkansas — with campuses in Springdale, Rogers and Fayetteville — for 27 years.

Two other nominees for SBC offices have been announced:

For first vice president — former Alabama Baptist pastor Clint Pressley, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

For second vice president — Hance Dilbeck, pastor of Quail Springs Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Other helpful information:

► To register online for the annual meeting, go to www.sbannualmeeting.net and click on the Messengers tab. After completing online registration, each messenger



BP photo

Southern Baptist Convention President Fred Luter delivers his presidential sermon at the 2013 annual meeting in Houston.

Going to the annual meeting?

Stay up-to-date on activities with the free app available for iPhone, iPad, Android and Blackberry.



It can be downloaded by typing in "SBC Annual Meeting 2014" in the smartphone's app store.

will receive an eight-digit registration code to present onsite. There a nametag will be printed. The traditional registration method also will be available.

► Messengers planning to propose resolutions must submit them no later than 15 days prior to the annual meeting. Detailed guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at www.sbannualmeeting.net under the Messengers tab.

► Preschool child care and activities for children who have completed grades 1–6 is available. Activities also are available for youth who have completed grades 7–12. Pre-registration is required online at www.sbannualmeeting.net under the "Children/Youth" tab. Onsite registration will not be accepted.

► Child care for children ages birth through 12 years also is available at the Pastors Conference. (BP)

Embrace Baltimore

Crossover Baltimore to mark 25 years of evangelistic outreach

For the past 25 years, Southern Baptists have begun each annual meeting by celebrating hundreds — sometimes thousands — of new souls won for Christ.

This celebration is the result of Crossover, the evangelistic outreach initiative preceding the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Each year the North American Mission Board (NAMB) partners with state conventions, associations and local churches to saturate the host city of the annual meeting with evangelistic events — this year in Baltimore, Md. Volunteers from across the country arrive in the city a few days prior to the annual convention to participate alongside local church members.

Bob Mackey, executive director of Baltimore Baptist Association, said, “Our churches are excited about the unique opportunity to share Christ with our city that Crossover will bring.

“Baltimore is not like a lot of other places in the country,” Mackey said. “We’re not in a predominantly Christian region of the country; we don’t have a church on every corner or throngs of people actively seeking out Christianity. Our hope is that, through the partnership of others in the SBC, Crossover will represent Christ to the people of Baltimore and our region and lay a greater foundation for our local churches.”

The outreach — with its block parties and door-to-door evangelism efforts — will di-



Frank S. Page (center), president of the SBC Executive Committee, shares the gospel at a block party during Crossover Houston in 2013.

BP photo

rectly benefit local church plants in the city.

Since 1989, NAMB has reported more than 30,000 professions of faith in Jesus Christ as a direct result of Crossover activities. Thousands more have been put in contact with local Southern Baptist churches. (BP)

For more information, visit www.embracebaltimore.com/crossover/ or contact Cindy Irizarry at cindycrossoverbaltimore2014@gmail.com or 443-219-2543.

Related meetings scheduled in conjunction with SBC in Baltimore

The National African American Fellowship will celebrate its 20th anniversary June 7–9 at the Baltimore Convention Center. The fellowship is working to establish a partnership with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to plant churches. It would focus on utilizing models that are culturally relevant and raising money to fund church plants.

► Hispanic pastors and church leaders are invited to the National Hispanic SBC Conference on June 8, starting at 5 p.m. in Room 337 and 338. A NAMB workshop, which will be held at 6:30 p.m. in Room 344, will focus on “Mobilizing the Hispanic Church.”

► During its fourth annual Send North

America luncheon, NAMB will once again highlight its partnership with Southern Baptists to push back lostness throughout North America. The event will be held June 9, at noon, in the Ballroom on Level 400 of the Baltimore Convention Center. Tickets are complimentary but must be reserved in advance. They are available at snaluncheon.com.

► NAMB will host all Southern Baptist Convention chaplains at a reception June 9, 3–5 p.m., in Rooms 340 and 341. To register for the event, email Keith Travis at ktravis@namb.net.

► The Ministers’ Wives Luncheon will be held June 10 in the Key Ballroom at the Hilton Baltimore. The event will feature author

Priscilla Shirer. Purchase advance tickets at LifeWay.com/sbcwives or pay at the door.

► A Samford University Alumni Reception will be June 11, 2 p.m., in Room 341, Level 300 of the Baltimore Convention Center.

► A free LoveLoud breakfast will be June 11 at 7 a.m. in Rooms 307 and 308. A panel will explore issues related to mental and emotional health and the Church’s responsibility to minister to individuals and families experiencing these struggles. To register, email Heather Aldrich at haldrich@namb.net.

► A NAMB-sponsored lunch honoring bivocational pastors and their wives will be June 11, 11:30 a.m., in Room 309. (BP, TAB)

SBC Pastors Conference to focus on theme ‘Show Us Your Glory’

The June 8–9 Pastors Conference will focus on the theme “Show Us Your Glory” at the Baltimore Convention Center prior to the Southern Baptist Convention’s annual meeting there. A former Alabama Baptist also is expected to be elected president of the 2015 Pastors Conference.

Current Pastors Conference President Bruce Frank, pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church, Arden, N.C., said he chose speakers who “have



RICE

a heart to pour into pastors” for the four sessions scheduled for Sunday and Monday. Speakers include Johnny Hunt, H.B. Charles, David Platt, Ronnie Floyd, Clayton King, Eric Mason, J.D. Greear, Tony Evans, Rick Warren, James MacDonald and Francis Chan. For more information, visit sbpc.net.

Former Alabama Baptist Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Fla., will be nominated for the 2015 conference president role on Monday.

Before serving in Clearwater, Rice was pastor of Gladeview Baptist Church, Anniston; Bethel Baptist Church, Dora; and Cypress Lake Baptist Church, Tampa, Fla.

Rice, 50, is a former Florida Baptist Convention president and author of two books, “Discover Dynamic Life” and “Before You Go: What Every Parent Needs to Say and Every Kid Needs to Hear.”

Rice earned an undergraduate degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity and doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. (BP)

Alabamians to lead at SBC annual meeting

Alabama Baptists will be among those serving during the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Baltimore, Md., June 10–11.

Appointments to the Committee on Committees were announced by SBC President Fred Luter Jr., in accordance with SBC Bylaw 19. The Committee on Committees will assemble in Baltimore just prior to the annual meeting to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations who, in turn, nominate trustees for the boards of SBC entities. SBC Bylaw 19 also provides that the Committee on Committees “shall nominate all special committees authorized during the sessions of the Convention not otherwise provided for.”

The Committee on Committees has 68 members, two from each of the 34 states and regions qualified for representation on boards of SBC entities.

Alabama members

Alabama’s committee members are Dennis Culbreth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jasper, and Bobby Burt, pastor of University Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Alabama Baptists also are among those nominated to serve on the SBC Executive Committee (EC), the four denominational boards — International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board (NAMB), LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources — the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business. Nominees were selected by the 2014 SBC Committee on Nominations and will serve if elected by messengers to the annual meeting.

Those nominated from Alabama are:

► D. Wayne Myrick, a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, and R. Ron Madison, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, nominated for a second term on the EC.

► David S. Puckett, layperson and member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, to serve on GuideStone’s board with term to expire in 2018.

► Cecil M. Sanders Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Headland, to serve as an IMB trustee with term to expire in 2018.

► Mike D. McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association, to serve as a NAMB trustee with term to expire in 2018. And Charles M. (Danny) Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, nominated for a second term.

► N. Bruce Moseley, pastor of Zion Baptist Church, Mobile, nominated to serve a second term with LifeWay.

► Larry W. Felkins, director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association, nominated to serve a second term on board of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. (BP)

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

EAST CULLMAN

► **Todd Holcomb** is the new minister of music for **First Church, Fairview, in Cullman**. He previously served as minister of music for 12 years for Center Grove Church, Cullman. He and his wife, Abbey, have one son. David Chambers is pastor.



HOLCOMB

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **Don Yancey**, director of missions for **Alabama-Crenshaw Association**, has announced his retirement from the association effective May 29. There will be a tea held in his honor at South Luverne

Church, Luverne, on June 1, 2:30 p.m.

CALHOUN

► **Antioch Church, Bynum**, will hold a Vacation Bible School Fun Day/Registration on May 31, 2-4 p.m. For information call the church at 256-236-3321. Bart Owens is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Tommy Strickland** will be the new music/education minister at **Hepzibah Church, Talladega**, beginning May 25. He comes from Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega where he served as the audiovisual coordinator. Keith Wrenn is pastor of Hepzibah.

COVINGTON

► **West Highland Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 74th homecoming June 1. Services be-

gin at 10:30 a.m. Music will be led by Jane Graddy, director of music, accompanied by Sue Reeves. Otis Corbitt, director of missions for Covington Association, will speak. A fellowship meal will follow at noon. Larry Stewart is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Reno Church, Woodstock**, will host The Florida Boys in concert June 7, 7 p.m. For information call 205-938-7890. Roasco Kornegay is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Millry**, will celebrate homecoming June 1. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. and the worship service will be at 11 a.m. Bobby McIlwain, a former pastor, will speak. Lunch will be served at noon and there will be singing after lunch. Everyone is invited to attend. Ron Pierce is pastor.

FBC Tuscaloosa to host writers conference

Patricia Hickman and Don Aycock will headline the upcoming 2014 Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

Hickman, whose address will be "How To Connect with Your Readers," is an award-winning Christian

novelist. Aycock is the pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Palatka, Fla. He also teaches as an adjunct professor and writes nonfiction books on writing, prayer, men's issues and ministry. He will speak on "Thinking Like a Christian Writer." Hickman and Aycock also will

lead instructional workshop sessions along with 15 other speakers. Topics include "Called To Write," "How To Get a Publisher To Accept Your Book" and "10 Essentials to Sharpening Your Writing."

In addition to the speakers, two literary agents of the Literary Management Group, Bruce Barbour and Karen Moore, will be available for individual sessions with participants.

The event will take place June 6-7 in the education building at First, Tuscaloosa. The deadline for preregistration is May 31 and attendance is limited to 200 guests.

The SCWC, founded in 1992, is in its 23rd year and is coordinated by Joanne Sloan and Cheryl Wray.

For more information on the SCWC and registration, visit www.sewconference.com, email sewworkshop@bellsouth.net or call 205-333-8603. (Hannah Muñoz)

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Prattville pastor Brooks marks 50 years in ministry

On April 13, Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville, members celebrated the 50th anniversary of their pastor's total ministry.

"It's been a good journey," said Winston Brooks of his half-century in ministry. He has been pastor of Calvary Baptist for eight years.

The members of Calvary in Autauga Baptist Association marked his accomplishment with a fellowship after the Sunday evening service. Floyd Smith, chairman of deacons, presented a plaque from the church to Brooks.

During the fellowship, Bill Morgan, director of missions for Autauga Association, enumerated highlights of Brooks' ministry.

Among the highlights that Brooks likes to recall are leading an Indiana church in constructing a new building while he was a student pastor.

He also led Calvary Baptist Church, Vincent, in Shelby Baptist Association in building a new sanctuary.

Most of all, "I enjoy the preaching and I enjoy the pastoral care," Brooks said of ministering.

He received his education from Samford University in Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

As a student, he served several churches as pastor. Then as a full-time pastor, he ministered at several Alabama Baptist churches including Wayside Baptist Church, Ashford. He is now a bivocational pastor and a hospice chaplain, currently working with Hospice of Montgomery.

Brooks also has served in various capacities in associations in which he has been a pastor. He and his wife, Betty, have two children and five grandchildren. (Leigh Pritchett)



BROOKS

REFLECTIONS

"WE GET A LOT OF LEFTOVERS FROM CHURCH DINNERS. I HOPE YOU LIKE SWEET POTATO CASSEROLES."



The Pastor's Dogs

JE KROGER.com



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

Remember to:

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

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

Ralph Moss (Buddy) Hardy Jr.

Missionary to Belize, ministry founder, dies

Ralph Moss (Buddy) Hardy Jr., who served as a missionary to Belize and started Fishers of Men International Missions Inc., died April 29. He was 67.

Hardy, a member of Shiloh Baptist Church, Sardis, earned a pilot's license and later an Airline Transport Pilot rating. He served in the Alabama Army National Guard and the Air Force Reserve for a combination of 33 years; 20 of those years were on active duty.

In 1990, he went on his first missions trip to Belize. For the next 13 years, he traveled to Belize at least once a year and helped to complete the Western Region Baptist Training Center in the Cayo District.

In 2003, Hardy began to host missions teams who went out to minister in rural villages. Later he realized the need for a separately funded ministry to support existing ministries and develop new missions projects. He then founded Fishers of Men, a "nonprofit missions organization formed to spread the love of Jesus Christ in the country of Belize," according to its website. Multiple Alabama Baptist churches served on missions trips through Fishers of Men.

Hardy is survived by his wife, Kathryn, three children and seven grandchildren. (TAB)



HARDY

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

May marks 450th anniversary of Calvin's death

John Calvin (1509–1564) may be the most important theologian since biblical times. He created the system known as “Calvinism,” which has had an immense impact up to the present. Yet its doctrine that God predestines the fate of all believers is among the most hotly debated in Christianity.

This year marks the 450th anniversary of his death May 27, 1564.

He was born “Jean Cauvin” on July 10, 1509, in Noyon, France. His father, a devout Catholic, originally wanted him to go into the ministry and paid for his education in the household of a noble family.

When a plague hit Noyon in 1523 Calvin accompanied the family to Paris. There he attended the College de la Marche and the College de Montaigu where he was at the top of his class. Around 1528 he decided against becoming

a priest and studied law because his father thought it offered better financial opportunities.

However, he also began studying the New Testament in its original Greek under Protestant reformer Melchior Wolmar.

Then dramatically in 1533 he had, as he described it, a “sudden conversion” in which “God subdued and brought my heart to docility.”

He combined his new faith with a brilliant intellect, legal knowledge and administrative talent. Soon many who accepted the Reformed doctrines in France turned to him for guidance.

In 1536 at the age of 27 Calvin wrote one of the most famous theological books ever published (many say it is actually the most famous, not just one of the most famous), “Institutes of the Christian Reli-

gion.” It was vital for the Protestant Reformation.

In 1537 he moved to Geneva, Switzerland. There he served as the city’s administrator, established schools and drew up a catechism of Christian doctrine.

In 1540 he married Idelette de Bure, an Anabaptist widow. Their only child lived but a few days. His wife, whom he called “the excellent companion of his life,” died in 1549. He mourned her loss until his death.

In 1558 Calvin, ill with fever and thinking he might die, forced himself to revise and enlarge the “Institutes.” The final edition was expanded from 21 chapters to 80.

The “Five Points of Calvinism” are set forth in the “Institutes.” The first is the total depravity of man. The second is unconditional election — God’s sovereignty

“elects” His children from before the beginning of time. The third point is limited atonement — the death and resurrection of Christ is a substitutionary payment for the sins of only God’s elect. The fourth point is irresistible grace — when God calls a person His call cannot ultimately be ignored. The final point is perseverance of the saints. It is not possible for one to “lose his salvation.”

Last sermon

In his last years Calvin had fever, asthma and gout. On Feb. 6, 1564, he preached his last sermon. He bade his final farewell to several ministers in April.

On May 27 he died at the age of 54. He was buried in an unmarked grave in the Cimetiere des Rois. A stone was added in the 19th century to mark a grave traditionally thought to be Calvin’s. ☩

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor’s degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M–Commerce) and a master’s degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



CALVIN

‘Care to CAREGIVER’

New initiatives focus on need for chaplains to recognize, improve the ways they deal with their grief

(continued from page 1)

sharper focus on the need for chaplains to get help as they suffer along with their comrades. Chaplains need to heed the lesson taught by flight attendants who warn airline passengers to put a flotation device on themselves before others, he said.

“With chaplains and other professionals, sometimes it’s just the opposite; we have a tendency to put the float device on everybody else first and then put the float device on self and that’s really not the most healthy way to take care of self,” he said. “I think we are turning the corner on that. I think the paradigm is shifting.”

Chaplain Robert A. Miller, an instructor at the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School in San Antonio, recalled a 2012 remembrance ceremony for 9/11 on a Kuwait City beach, where chaplains and other soldiers were given carnations, told to recall those they had served and lost and watch their flowers drift away into the surf.

“I saw chaplains and soldiers alike shedding tears, embracing one another and recognizing it’s OK to share the fact that all of us do grieve, all of us suffer loss,” said Miller, a Southern Baptist. “We can-

not change it but we cannot afford to let it change us so we can no longer be effective.”

Steven Spidell has measured some of that toll. In a 2009 survey, he found that one-fifth of health care chaplains reported “disenfranchised grief” — grief that was not supported in the workplace.

Being caregivers

“Clergy are trained to be caregivers — that’s what we’re hired to do,” said Spidell, a staff chaplain at Houston Methodist West Hospital in Texas. “That we would need care is a foreign concept, I think, to most faith groups.”

Spidell said the hardest part of his job is when he cares for a family that has suddenly and unexpectedly lost a relative at the hospital — “sobbing and yelling and screaming and are just breaking down because their pain is so intense.”

Such an episode leaves him “physically and emotionally exhausted” and sometimes it takes days for him to admit how tough it was. But he said he is grateful for the time he spends with a family, which moves on to a funeral without him.

“I’m on to the next code blue,” he said. “My job continues.” (RNS, TAB)



RNS photo

(L to r) Retired Air Force Chaplain (Brig. Gen.) David H. Cyr and retired Army Chaplain (Col.) John Schumacher join a sentinel and sergeant of the guard in placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Tailored study

NOBTS removes on-campus requirement

Alabama students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) extensions can now attain their degrees without spending any time on the school's main campus. Trustees approved the removal of the on-campus requirements for distance learning degrees during their April 16 spring meeting.

"This is big news for our extension center students," said Gary Myers, director of public relations at NOBTS. "They no longer have to complete any courses on the main campus unless they choose to do so."

In removing the on-campus requirement for distance learning degrees, trustees acted on the notification NOBTS received in February that it had been granted "comprehensive distance learning" status by its accrediting agency, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. Previously all master's students were required to earn at least 30 hours of their degree on the main campus — or 18 on-campus hours for students at extension hubs in Marietta, Ga., or Orlando, Fla.

Myers believes the impact on Alabama extensions is obvious.

"Students will save a considerable amount of money on travel costs," he said. "Most Alabama students completed all 30 on-campus hours at the New Orleans campus."

Still school officials believe certain courses and events will continue to draw some students to the main campus on occasion. Some workshops, typically offered

in the summer and during fall and spring breaks, will remain an attractive option for extension students seeking specialized degrees and those who enjoy interacting with on-campus faculty as part of the main campus experience.

Trustees also approved four new extension centers including one at a state prison in Florida and four new undergraduate certificate teaching sites in Georgia. An undergraduate extension center, modeled after the successful program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, La., was approved for the Hardee Correctional Institute in Bowling Green, Fla. The new Georgia centers will offer undergraduate and graduate coursework. The new centers will be launched as soon as accreditation approval and funding can be obtained.

More options for students

NOBTS President Chuck Kelley, speaking after the trustee meeting, reiterated the seminary's commitment to accessible education. He said these new initiatives are designed to give students more options.

"We are trying to make it possible for any student to fit theological education into their place in life and their calling from God," Kelley said. "They will be able to flow from one form of theological education to another without penalty or extra barriers."

"So if they want to do online, classroom, residential, nonresidential — anything from a certificate to a Ph.D. — we are designing our curriculum to allow the students to tailor their study to their calling and their circumstances." (BP)

NOBTS to launch 3 new Alabama extension centers this fall

With New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) launching three new extension centers in Alabama this fall, theological training close to home is becoming more of a reality for ministers in the state.

In August, NOBTS will launch extension centers in Huntsville, Rainsville and Tuscaloosa. With the new sites, plus existing centers in Birmingham, Montgomery and nearby in Pensacola, Fla., NOBTS now offers seminary courses within a two-hour drive from any location in Alabama.

"This is a win for Alabama believers desiring accredited, affordable and accessible ministry training," said Peter Kendrick, the seminary's associate regional dean for Alabama and Georgia. "Those who are comfortable with

technology can now access high-tech online courses, but those desiring a more personal face-to-face learning can meet in one of [the] extension centers and still live and serve in their community."

More information about the seminary's study options on the main campus, at extension centers and via the Internet is available at www.nobts.edu/academics, or by calling 1-855-662-8701. Information and contact details for each of the Alabama extension centers is available at www.nobts.edu/extensions. To apply as a student, complete the application at www.nobts.edu/apply/default.html.

Previous stories about the new extension centers coming to Alabama can be found at www.thealabamabaptist.org. (NOBTS, TAB)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

From Easter to Pentecost

Ascension Significance (Part 4 of 5)

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

As noted last week, the ascension marked the inauguration of Christ's high priestly ministry. Two weeks ago we looked at Jesus' promise in John 7:37-38. Using the imagery of water in that promise, He spoke of the Holy Spirit, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Jesus' imagery suggests a life of fullness, even of overflowing. Such a life has often been described as an abundant life or as victorious living.

Ephesians 2:4-7 is instructive for us about the relation between Christ's ascension to the Father and His provision for victorious Christian living. All along we have noted that Christ's exaltation was in three stages. This passage uses verbs that would describe those stages: He was "made alive" (resurrection), "raised up" (ascension) and "seated" (enthronement). However, the striking part of this is that in this passage these verbs refer primarily to us as believers.

Resurrection life

Using a threefold repetition of the preposition "with," this Ephesian passage declares that God "made us alive together with Christ" (v. 5), "raised us up with Him" (v. 6a) and "seated us with Him in the heavenly places" (v. 6b).

To say that believers are made alive together with Christ is to say that we are in possession of His kind of life — resurrection life. Our new life in Christ is the life of heaven and of eternity. We might even dare to think of it as God's kind of life. Although at one time we were dead in trespasses and sins (2:1), we can experience victorious living.

Not only do Christians possess "resurrection life," we also possess "ascension life." Joined to Christ by faith, our lives have been raised up to heaven,

where we even now enjoy heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20) with our names enrolled in the book of life, unlike those who are outside of Christ (Rev. 20:12-15). Such benefits as these are altogether due to our union with Him.

Furthermore we share with Christ a position of spiritual authority and security, since He has carried us with Him all the way to the Father's right hand. He has won for us the final victory — victory over death, sin and Satan. No safer place in all the universe can be found than the right hand of the throne of God.

Joined with Christ

What do we do with such exalted statements? They take us back to where this week's study began — an abundant, overflowing, victorious life made possible here and now through our spiritual association with Christ. From God's point of view we are co-raised, co-ascended and co-enthroned. Not only can we know our citizenship is in heaven, since we are inseparably joined with Christ, we can live in this present world with the certainty that our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Our challenge is to live out daily on earth the eternal life already possessed by virtue of our spiritual union with Christ — made alive, raised up and seated with Him, so that we are living not just toward heaven but from heaven, living out of the realities of a life already anchored above, where Christ is ascended and enthroned. ☩

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.



Obsessed with the **END**



Predicting date of Christ's return continues, but professors call it 'gnosticism'

It may not get a lot of attention because it falls on a Thursday, but May 29 is Ascension Day. This is the day Jesus' resurrected body ascended into heaven as His disciples looked on 40 days after Easter.

In the first chapter of Acts, two men in white robes ask the gazing apostles: "Why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw Him go into heaven."

Ascension Day recognizes that Christ's plan of redemption is incomplete until the Lord's return. About what day that will occur, Jesus says in Mark 13: "No one knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son Himself. Only the Father knows."

That hasn't stopped people from speculating, however, from the Seventh-day Adventists who this month celebrate the 150th anniversary of a church that didn't expect to be around for a decade to Harold Camping, the radio preacher who, based on numerical interpretations of the Bible, predicted the Rapture would occur May 21, 2011.

"Some have said: 'Jesus just said we can't know the day or the hour. But that doesn't mean we can't know the year,'" said Doug Weaver, professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. "They insist we can read the signs of the times."

Some claim great specificity. A billboard along I-35 in Central Texas proclaims that on Aug. 2, 2027, "Christ stands on Mt. Olivet at noon." It cites Amos 8:9 as Bible proof. A website links the verse to an anticipated solar eclipse that will be visible in Jerusalem.

Date-setting is most common among fundamentalist Christians who interpret the Bible most literally.

Thomas Slater, professor of New Testament language and literature at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta, calls it a form of "neo-gnosticism," similar to an early Christian heresy with a dualistic belief system that the material world should be shunned and salvation attained through knowledge.

"It's a kind of religious elitism that says the knowledge we have puts us in a different category," he said. "In trying to eliminate uncertainty, it creates a form of gnosticism that teaches, 'My knowledge will save me.' What saves any of us is trust in God through Jesus Christ. There's not any amount of knowledge that will save us."

Interest in end-times prophecy

Belief in the Second Coming is a fundamental of the Christian faith. The Westminster Confession of Faith, a Reformed confessional statement drawn up in 1646, says Jesus "ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of His Father, making intercession, and shall return, to judge men and angels, at the end of the world."

The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith picked up that language. The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message states both that Jesus "ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God" and "will return in power and glory to judge the world

and to consummate His redemptive mission."

Weaver said interest in end-times prophecy historically has intensified during periods of cultural crisis. Middle East unrest, terrorist attacks and natural disasters prompt many Christians today to study prophetic timelines to determine if current events might be signs of Christ's Second Coming.

"It's been going on for a long time, but it gained new momentum with the rise of premillennial dispensationalism," Weaver said.

The millennium describes a 1,000-year period prophesied in Revelation 20 where Satan is bound and Christ reigns with the resurrected saints on Earth. Christians historically have divided into three predominant schools of thought on the matter.

Amillennialists view the 1,000 years as figurative and symbolic. Postmillennialism, which reached its apex in the 19th and early 20th century, believes Christians will usher in the kingdom of God through social reform and missions.

Premillennialists take a dimmer view of history. They believe things are getting worse and will continue that way until Christ intervenes to set things right and establish a 1,000-year reign on Earth.

The premillennial view goes back a long way, but its most popular form today — dispensationalism — dates back to John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in the mid-1800s.

It received a boost among conservative

Christians in the United States in the 20th century through the annotated "Scofield Reference Bible." Interest accelerated with Hal Lindsey's bestselling "The Late, Great Planet Earth" in 1970, and entered popular culture with the "Left Behind" series in the 1990s.

Weaver said the movement's positive side is its absolute certainty in God's providential care for His people and in offering hope for the future. "The problem is that it doesn't focus on the present," he said. "It's all about God's activity in the future."

Social conditions

Slater said the assumption that social conditions must continue to slide until Christ's return absolves Christians from the responsibility to make the world a better place in the here and now. "It's not a very Christian attitude," he said.

Al Smith, psychology professor at Wayland Baptist University's San Antonio campus, said one factor driving the belief is fear.

"The more the world around us seems chaotic and falling apart, people gravitate to anything that gives them reassurance," he said. That is why a preacher who can seemingly offer a clear-cut timeline when the future looks uncertain can usually find a ready audience. "People gravitate toward a charismatic person who is seen to have inside information," Smith said.

Other criticism includes that a preoccupation with presumed facts about Christ's coming leaves little room for faith. It can feed self-centeredness and even narcissism, because it separates the redeemed from those who will be left behind. (ABP)

**Ascension Day
is May 29.**

"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come."

Mark 13:32-33

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF *THE ALABAMA BAPTIST*, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR EMAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG.

COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: South Roebuck Baptist Church is seeking a permanent pastor to serve an aging traditional congregation in a changing neighborhood. Please send resumé to: jmac1776@bellsouth.net or call Jim McLendon at 205-836-1776.

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.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & SENIOR ADULTS: First Baptist Church of Piedmont is accepting resúmes for full-time position of minister of music and senior adults. Blended service. Please email resumé to: sandra5131950@yahoo.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF STUDENTS & FAMILY MINISTRIES: First Baptist Church of Mt. Olive, Mt. Olive, Ala., is now accepting resúmes for a full-time associate pastor of students and family ministries. Please submit resúmes or questions by email to: Sheila@fbcmo.org.

YOUTH/CHILDREN'S PASTOR: Bethany Baptist Church is seeking a full-time youth/children's pastor. Interested applicants please send resúmes to: Bethany Baptist Church, ATTN: Youth Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 7, Horton, AL 35980.

CHILDREN'S PASTOR: First Baptist Church of the Islands in Savannah, Ga., is seeking a full-time children's pastor. This person will lead the children's ministry (kindergarten-5th grade) in a growing, contemporary church setting, which averages 575 people in overall worship attendance. The ideal candidate has a sense of God's specific call to reach and minister to grade school-aged children. Strong personal skills in relating to children and families will be expected. Desire to invest life and time in the lives of children is also expected. Ability to oversee a variety of facets of children's ministry is a must. The current children's ministry impacts over 150 children weekly in a variety of ministry settings (Sunday School, worship, AWANA) and utilizes 75 volunteer leaders with potential for incredible growth. Please send resúmes with cover letter and references to: kidlife@fbcislands.com or to: Search Team, FBC Islands, 6613 Johnny Mercer Boulevard, Savannah, GA 31410.

OTHER POSITIONS

PIANIST: Clearview Baptist Church in Pinson, Ala., is seeking a pianist. Please contact the church office at 205-854-2027 or connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

RELIEF HOUSE PARENTS: Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Seeking committed Christian couple to care for children at the Decatur campus. Schedule is 6 days on, 3 days off. Full-time with benefits. High school diploma or beyond, valid driver's license, background check required. Contact Dr. Michael Smith, 256-355-6893.

PART-TIME ACCOUNTANT: 16-20 hours per week position at Harvest Baptist Church located in Harvest, Ala. Accounting experience and proficiency with Quickbooks required. Email resumé to: jobs@harvest-baptist.org.

SALES: Murphy Robes seeks a part-

time, commissioned-only sales professional. Perfect salary augmentation for choir directors with networking skills. No limit on how much you can make. Fax resumé to 727-873-0873.

BUSINESS

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

MOVING? LOCAL, STATEWIDE OR LONG DISTANCE: Coleman American/Allied Van Lines. Special rate and programs for Alabama Baptist ministers, staff and church members. Contact Gary Washington at 205-540-7470 or gary.washington@covan.com.

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

MODULAR BUILDINGS: Remanufactured modular church and classrooms. Prices start at an incredible \$19.95 per square foot plus freight/setup. Many sizes. Huge savings. Cash or will lease to well established churches. ROSE Modular Buildings, 1-888-608-1173.

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

DO YOU NEED A CHURCH PIANIST?: We have piano CDs for congregational singing. Hymns, seasonal, choruses. Worship Service Resources 1-877-977-6800. Free demo. Special church pricing. www.wsrpianocds.com.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

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

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

FOR SALE

USED MODULAR FELLOWSHIP HALL: Great condition. Remanufactured by factory. 2,000-7,000 square-feet or larger. Only a few remaining. Huge savings. Cash or will lease to well established churches. ROSE Modular Buildings, 1-888-608-1173.

Kenya passes law legalizing polygamy

Christian clergy in Kenya fear that a new marriage law signed recently by President Uhuru Kenyatta will tear families apart and weaken the Church and the nation.

The law legalizes polygamy, allowing men to marry multiple wives. Parliament passed the measure in March after an amendment was added that allows a man to take another wife without informing his existing wife.

Christian leaders said the law would dilute the principle of holy matrimony. They urged Kenyatta to reject the law, but with the recent signing, the clerics

expressed their frustration.

"We are very unhappy," said David Gathanju, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

Separation, divorce

"If polygamy is allowed it will open the floodgates for all sorts of separations and divorces. That will surely hurt the family institution and the country at large will suffer," he added.

Under the new law there are five types of marriages in Kenya: Christian, Islamic, Hindu, monogamous and polygamous. Kenya is predominantly Christian, with Muslims making up about

11 percent of its population, mostly along the Somali border, its coastal region and in cities such as Mombasa.

Bishop Joseph Methu, leader of the Federation of Evangelical and Indigenous Christian Churches of Kenya, said, "I think the law will cause more problems and confusion than it would solve."

Muslim leaders backed the law, saying polygamy is found in the Bible and in the Quran.

The law sets a minimum age of marriage at 18. It also allows wives a 50 percent share of the property acquired during the union, among other benefits. (RNS)



"I haven't gone hungry
thanks to Mission:Dignity."

They call it Dignity. We call it a Mission.

GuideStone's **MISSION:DIGNITY** ministry provides critical financial assistance to thousands of retired Southern Baptist ministers, workers and their widows.

BUT WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.



Mission:Dignity
Assisting Retired Ministers and Spouses

Donate online at www.MissionDignitySBC.org.



Scan to order materials from your smartphone or tablet.

Call 1-888-98-GUIDE (1-888-984-8433) for more information | facebook.com/MissionDignity | twitter.com/GuideStone

Want to know God?

Pastor Matt McGukin
Concord Baptist Church, Bessemer

A few years ago we were just the typical middle-class family, a husband, a wife and one son. We were happy and content but not complete. In the last two years, our lives have changed dramatically. In September 2012 we adopted our now 12-year-old daughter. She is a beautiful girl, but she faces several health challenges. Our daughter is on dialysis and is looking for a second kidney transplant. Almost a year later, we adopted our youngest son who is now 18 months old and also is on dialysis and awaiting a transplant. Our days are filled with hospital visits, medical supplies and dialysis in addition to all the normal responsibilities of life.

Our family is very different, and not just in size. We went from an all-white family to a white, black and Asian family in a matter of two years. You ought to see the quizzical looks we get in public as people try to figure how this family came to be. Many people think we must have lost our minds. Why would anyone adopt kids who don't look like them? Why would anyone adopt kids with special medical needs? Why would anyone take on all that responsibility?

In the last few years we have learned so much and have been blessed in abundance. Our experience has given me a new perspective on how much God loves us. The Bible tells us that we have all sinned and are separated from God. Our sin has created a desperate need in our lives to be forgiven. The Bible also tells us that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has paid our adoption fee (Gal. 4:4-7). Anyone who will turn from their sin and call on the name of Jesus will not only be forgiven but adopted into the family of God.

You may feel lost and alone like no one loves you or wants to be a part of your life. But God, under no obligation to love you, has made a way for you to be a part of His family. I love my adopted son and daughter more than I can ever have imagined I would; they are mine. God loves you and me so much more. Call on Jesus today, turn from your sin and become a part of the family of God. ☩



Photo by Brian Harris

Lawrence Phipps, with the help of translator Nadia Morokhovetz, presents the gospel to people waiting outside a medical clinic in Dniprodzerzhynsk, Ukraine.



Photo by Brian Harris

A member of new church plant Love of Christ Baptist Church in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, shares the gospel with a patient outside of the clinic.

'Immediate touch'

Ukrainians glad to see Montgomery's Vaughn Forest missions team

By **Brian Harris**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ukraine's current political unrest may leave its people concerned about their future, but glimpses of God's love and provision are keeping many of them encouraged.

"We have had times of worries here, but we don't get depressed because we know the Lord is not going to leave us or forsake us," said Lydia Davienko, a member of the Church at Amur in Dnipropetrovsk, who helped with a recent medical missions clinic hosted by Alabama Baptists.

"I'm so happy to see our friends who come from abroad, who come here to support us physically and spiritually," she said. "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart that you paid attention to us."

An eight-member medical missions team out of Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, spent a week in Dnipropetrovsk, the nation's fourth largest city, in early May.

The group consisted of a doctor, nurse, pharmacist and five others, including the congregation's immediate former pastor, Lawrence Phipps, now the leader of It's Life Ministry.

"It's been amazing to talk to the people (in Ukraine) who absolutely can't believe we came," Phipps said. "They know that their country is in turmoil. They're doubly appreciative that we came in a time of crisis."

The team worked alongside International Mission Board (IMB) church planters Ross and Kasey Lewis as well as Linda and Mike Ray, the IMB team strategy leader for east central Ukraine.

"One of the greatest things about doing a medical clinic is that it's an immediate touch into people's lives," Linda Ray said. "I think so much about how Jesus healed, touched and did what He could as He would go. It's really an exciting project to be a part of."

One of the medical clinics was conducted in a former Soviet-era apartment building that will house Love of Christ Baptist Church, a new congregation being planted by Dnipropetrovsk's Central Baptist Church.

The clinic offered free checkups and reading glasses for those who needed them.

'Real medicine'

Dr. Lee Franklin, a Montgomery-area oncologist, said the IMB representatives have learned that medical clinics "are a great way to reach adults. They come for medical care, but on the way they get real medicine. They get to hear about Jesus."

As Dnipropetrovsk residents came to the clinic, Ukrainian church members gathered

contact and medical information and engaged in conversation, including sharing the gospel. The team shared the gospel with more than 700 people and some among the group made salvation decisions.

Igor, the lead church planter for Love of Christ Baptist, said the team's visit and medical clinics helped the church become more familiar with its community. "We are really glad that God made this possible," Igor said. "Many of the people have never heard about Christ. It was very beautiful for us to see how their eyes were opened and ready to accept this good news."

Other locales for medical clinics included church buildings, an office building and the abandoned second floor of a town hall. ☩



Photo by Brian Harris

Nurse Judy Harris administers a glucose test to a patient with Ukrainian Dr. Helen Gorban watching at the Church at Amur in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

‘Matter of tithe’

In South America, Cebrián Bolívar (far right) became one of Southern Baptist representative Sam Cordell’s (far left) top church planters. Bolívar started 26 churches in 18 months. Now in South Asia, he is learning to navigate the continent’s crowded slums.



IMB photo

Quichua Indian believer plants 26 churches, leaves home to share Christ in South Asia

There was little in life to predict that Cebrián Bolívar would one day become a missionary in one of South Asia’s most populated cities. He grew up on a farm high in South America’s Andes Mountains where his parents and siblings still scratch a living from the soil.

But that was before he met Sam Cordell.

Cordell was a Southern Baptist representative with a plan. In less than a decade he trained a cadre of 200 Quichua Indian believers to range the scattered mountain villages of their people, planting churches. And Bolívar was one of the best; he planted 26.

When Cordell announced he was leaving South America for Asia, Bolívar was one of several who asked if they could go with him.

You have always told us to reach out beyond ourselves, they said. Cordell agreed. But it won’t be easy, he warned.

Life is hard in the high Andes. Farmers earn little more than enough to survive. There is not a lot left over to support

someone on the missions field. And of his father’s 10 children, Bolívar was the one his parents thought most likely to stay home, take over the farm and care for them in their old age.

When the idea of Bolívar serving in Asia came up, his parents were against it.

One day Bolívar asked his father the following questions: “Father,” he said, “if you have 10 sheep, how many belong to the Lord?”

“One,” his father said.

“And 10 chickens?” Bolívar asked.

“Again, one,” his father answered.

“Father, you have 10 children,” Bolívar said. “Shouldn’t one go to the Lord?”

In the end, Bolívar’s going to South Asia and working with Cordell came down to the matter of a tithe.

But the tithe was just the beginning. Cordell told him getting to South Asia wasn’t going to be easy. First there was the matter of language. And then there was the matter of support.

Bolívar’s first language is Quichua; his second is Spanish. But it is not the Spanish of the classroom. It is the language of the street. And neither Spanish nor Qui-

chua are of much use in South Asia.

In 2008, Bolívar began studying English through an Internet course. And when he arrived in 2011, he began the study of his fourth language: Hindi.

Local support

He used the years between to garner support he would need by speaking with churches and individuals up and down the Andes, sharing his passion for South Asian peoples and what it would take to get there.

Now more than two years into his three-year commitment, 20 Quichua families set aside money from their meager earnings and send the funds needed to support Bolívar. None of them are wealthy. Only

two families own a motorized vehicle.

Yet they are faithful.

And Bolívar, in turn, continues to grow in knowledge of his new land, its languages and customs. He has an affinity for students a bit younger than his 27 years. They are attracted to him and include him in their gatherings and outings. He has even traveled across the continent with a couple of them.

This year, Cordell and Bolívar saw the first one among them make a commitment to Christ.

Cordell will tell you it’s all part of the plan.

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

To give online or to find resources for church leaders to promote giving to the Cooperative Program, visit imb.org/offering.



IMB photo

Cebrián Bolívar (right) studies English and Hindi with his language tutor. Now more than two years into his three-year commitment to plant churches in South Asia, his language acquisition is steadily improving, particularly in English.



IMB photo

When South Asia’s language and culture seem overwhelming to Cebrián Bolívar, the church planter will retreat to his simple room, pick up the guitar a volunteer from the United States left behind and sing and play songs in his native language.



Christian girl raped, held from medical care

MALHE KI, Pakistan — Threats by the Muslim family of a villager in Punjab Province of Pakistan who raped a 7-year-old Christian girl prevented her from receiving hospital care for two days, sources said.

Targeted under the assumption of impunity for Muslims who attack Christians, the young daughter of a farmhand in Malhe Ki village had gone out April 20 to a neighborhood shop when Fakhare-Alam Nagra and another man attacked her from behind.

Nasreen Joyce, the victim's paternal aunt, said the girl's father, Iqbal Masih, looked after the cattle of Zulfiqar Nagra, an uncle of the primary suspect. When the girl's father approached the Nagra family, Zulfiqar Nagra threatened him and later held him hostage.

Aneeqa Maria, who as head of The Voice Society helped the family obtain police, medical and legal help, said the girl was a "soft target" because the rapist assumed that her family as Christians would not be able to stand up to Muslims.

Security officials in Eritrea arrest 5 more Christians

ASMARA, Eritrea — Eritrea is again persecuting officially recognized religious bodies with the arrest in late April of five Christians set to be ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Open Doors announced May 1 that security officials in the capital, Asmara, arrested Petros Yosief, Bemnet Tesfay, Akililu Tesfay, Ermias Hadgu and Aron Mehretu.

In 2005, Eritrean authorities cracked down on the officially recognized Eritrean Orthodox Church, persecuting those who supported a renewal movement within the church and who protested religious persecution.

At its worst point, persecution in Eritrea resulted in an estimated 3,000 Christians incarcerated for their faith by the end of 2010, with most held in shipping containers in desert camps and others in underground cells, according to the Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin.

Christians' belongings confiscated, church raided

SYRDARYA, Uzbekistan — Court bailiffs in Uzbekistan's central Samarkand Region admit they confiscated a car, a vacuum cleaner and other household items from two families beyond the legally defined deadline.

The seizures came after the two Baptists refused to pay fines imposed in 2012 to punish them for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief. Meanwhile 15 police and other officials raided a church's Sunday meeting for worship in a home in Syrdarya.

Open Doors THRIFT

Calhoun Association relocates community thrift store

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Calhoun Baptist Association offers outreach and support to its neighbors by way of service centers that provide food and clothing to those in need. In an effort to supplement the funding for the service centers, Calhoun Association opted to open Open Doors Thrift store in 2013 in a small doublewide trailer that had been donated for the cause. It wasn't long before the store needed more room, and volunteers went to work to make that happen.

"Last year we served over 3,300 families and 61 souls were saved through the (service centers) ministry," said Jim Davis, associate director of church and community ministries for Calhoun Association. "We gave out close to 120,000 pounds of food."

The thrift store was able to raise money to help the ministry, but the space and location were both limiting, so Jerry Duncan, who'd been involved in the original thrift store ministry, began searching for a new space to occupy.

"I looked at about 40 to 50 properties between December and March before I found the space we ultimately chose," Duncan said.

Duncan and Davis are both thrilled with the thrift store's new location. It's a former car repair shop in a high-traffic spot.

"We negotiated a rent agreement and then started searching for volunteers to come in to clean the place up and make it ready," Davis said, noting they worked on the property for about three months.

Thankfully they weren't short on volunteers anxious to make the space perfect for the thrift store. They had help from Carpenters for Christ; a men's ministry out of Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford; a group of electricians came from Mount Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria; and local youth groups

also contributed to improve the facility in time for its May 8 soft opening and May 10 grand opening.

Now that the store has grown from having 635 square feet to 2,500 square feet, they'll be open three days a week instead of one to two, meaning their volunteer workforce needed to increase.

One such volunteer is Judy Pritchett, who learned about Open Doors Thrift while volunteering at the Calhoun County Baptist Association Service Center. Pritchett and other volunteers are from area Baptist churches and some split their volunteer time between the thrift store and other Calhoun Baptist outreaches, like the service centers.

Pritchett is proud of the quality of merchandise the store offers and said they've received several positive comments about the cleanliness of the building and the good prices on clothing. (Area churches donate 70 percent of the clothing for the thrift store, and much of the rest of their inventory comes from other secondhand clothing stores in town and donations from individuals.)

"People have an opportunity not only to save money with their purchases, but others will benefit from the proceeds," she said. "People in Calhoun are very generous when it comes to helping others."

Volunteering close to home

Davis said he continues to be inspired by the volunteers who support Open Doors Thrift and other Calhoun Association ministries.

"I encourage the churches to tell their people that while it's good to go overseas and take the gospel around the world, you can be a missionary right here in our own community and the lost come to you through the doors or our service centers," he said. "We see over 300 families a month, and it's a joyful ministry to be a part of. The thrift store will help enhance what we can do for those families in need."

Open Doors Thrift, located at 227 E. Street in Anniston, will be open Thursdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



J. Rodney Bledsoe, J.D.
Chief Development Officer

Blended gifts
make your giving go farther

MAKE A GIFT TODAY AND FOR THE FUTURE

Are you already making annual gifts to help your church or favorite charity? Consider adding a planned gift to your contribution of cash or property this year.

- Fixed income for life
- Income and tax savings
- Additional tax-free funds
- Gifts to family and charity
- Tax-free inheritance
- Estate tax savings

Added Gift Options	Gift Benefits
Bequest	■ ■ ■
Charitable Gift Annuity	■ ■ ■ ■
Charitable Remainder Unitrust	■ ■
Life Insurance	■ ■ ■ ■



Contact us to learn more about blended giving options and their benefits.

The Baptist Foundation of Alabama
P.O. Box 241227 | Montgomery, AL 36124
(334) 394-2000 | tbfa@tbfa.org
www.tbfa.org

Increase the impact of your giving, provide greater tax savings, preserve wealth for you and your family and continue supporting Kingdom work!

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 25

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

INVEST IN THE BEST

Song of Songs 5:6-10; 6:1-3; 8:4-7

Marriage in the Western world has been under attack in recent years. In the United States, the divorce rate has increased to about 50 percent. The more the U.S. moves away from a Christian basis, the less value marriage has in our culture. Even the number of Christians who get divorced has increased recently. This figure should be the most worrisome for believers — it shows that in some ways, Christian marriage isn't that different from non-Christian marriage, but this is not supposed to be the case. Since marriage is ordained by God, Christians need to take their marriages seriously and do what they can to protect them.

Longing Love (5:6, 8-10)

In these passages, the groom was distant from his bride, and she obviously misses him and longs to be with him. Surely this is a good sign — if a couple does not long to be with each other it should send up warning signals. It is wise for married couples to spend time with each other on a regular basis. There are couples who are so busy raising children that once their children leave for work or college, they don't seem to know each other anymore and they don't know what to do with each other. Communication is key to a good, healthy relationship that lasts.

Exclusive Love (6:1-3)

When we commit to another person in marriage, that is the only person who we should think about with romantic affection. This also applies to spending time with members of the opposite gender. It is possible for a work relationship to become an emotional relationship, where there is no sexual aspect but important concerns about life are shared, leaving out the spouse. This begins to create a separation between the married couple because this emotional element of the marriage relationship is being spent with someone else. One needs to be especially careful of this because it can easily morph into a sexual affair.

True Love (8:4-7)

One thing that is important to consider is that not everyone is called to be married. Interestingly in the early Church, many people believed that it was superior to not marry at all — this is why the Roman Catholic Church still insists upon celibacy for priests, monks and nuns. In the U.S., many Christians tend to emphasize the other extreme — that people really need to be married. Many people find their identity in whom they are dating or in whom they marry, or others feel like they need to be married in order to be "complete." Clearly it is imperative that any Christian find their identity in Jesus Christ — He is the One who brings about true identity and completion.

However, many people do feel called to be married, which is a good thing, and they should be free to marry. But those seeking to be married need to use much wisdom because it is not something to rush into. The most important aspect of a potential partner needs to be their relationship with God. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:14 that we are not to be yoked to unbelievers. Christians should never marry non-Christians because there is a great likelihood that the non-Christian will lead the Christian astray, and it certainly makes raising children difficult as the children are given mixed signals when it comes to how to live and act and what to believe.

Furthermore Christians need to be sure to affirm sexual purity until marriage. Modern culture tells us that we should have sex whenever we feel "ready" and with whom ever we want. This attitude is not Christian at all. Sex is to be reserved for marriage. Just because society tells us it is OK, Christians answer to God, not society, and we obey Him.

In modern society, Christians should be leading the way in showing the world how marriage is supposed to work. Instead of being transformed to the culture — Christians get divorced as much as non-Christians in American society — Christians need to show how to truly love one another with forgiveness, compassion and commitment.

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

HOPE SHARED Acts 3:1-10

Last week's lesson focused on the apostle Peter. Peter failed in perhaps the worst way possible: three times he denied that he knew Jesus (John 18). Yet Jesus forgave him, restored him and entrusted him with the task of ministering to others in Jesus' name (John 21). This week's lesson also features Peter, but now, as the glad recipient of God's great grace, he in turn extends grace and hope to one who was in desperate need.

(1-4)

Acts 3:1-10 describes a remarkable exchange between Peter and John and a lame man they encountered at the temple in Jerusalem. As was the custom of many Jewish Christians in the earliest days of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46), Peter and John had gone up to the temple at the hour of prayer. The "hour of prayer" refers to the time of the afternoon sacrifice. Ordinarily a crowd would gather to pray as the priests carried out the sacrifice. Also at the temple during the hour of prayer that day was a man lame from birth who had come to beg for alms (that is, charitable gifts) from those entering the temple for the afternoon sacrifice. Where better to ask for charity than at the temple gate during one of the busiest times of the day? Since begging at the temple gate was the lame man's daily practice, perhaps this was his primary (or only) means of gathering resources for himself. He likely received aid from some who entered the temple, but surely he also was well acquainted with disappointment as many others passed him by, day after day. On one particular day, however, the man's plea for alms fell on the ears of Peter and John. The two apostles stopped and gave the lame man their full attention, which clearly gave the man hope that they were going to help him (Acts 3:4-5).

Surely it is significant that Peter and John did not ignore the lame man's re-

quest. They did not simply hurry by him on their way to pray; rather, they saw the man's need and stopped to help. Christians today have the opportunity to pay attention to the needs of others. People all around us need hope. How willing are we to see others' needs and to hear their cries for help and hope?

(5-8)

The lame man expected to receive money from Peter and John. But Peter told the man he did not have any money to give him; instead, he would give him something even better: healing. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Peter told the man to stand up and walk. As Peter helped him up from the ground, the man immediately was healed. This one who had been lame from birth suddenly was able not only to stand but also to walk and even to leap as he entered the temple praising God (v. 8).

Christians today may not have the power to heal a person's body, but we still can offer the hope of Christ to those who are hurting. We ourselves have experienced the love, forgiveness, grace and mercy of God. Now God can offer comfort and hope to others through us. How willing are we to be vessels God uses to breathe hope into the lives of others?

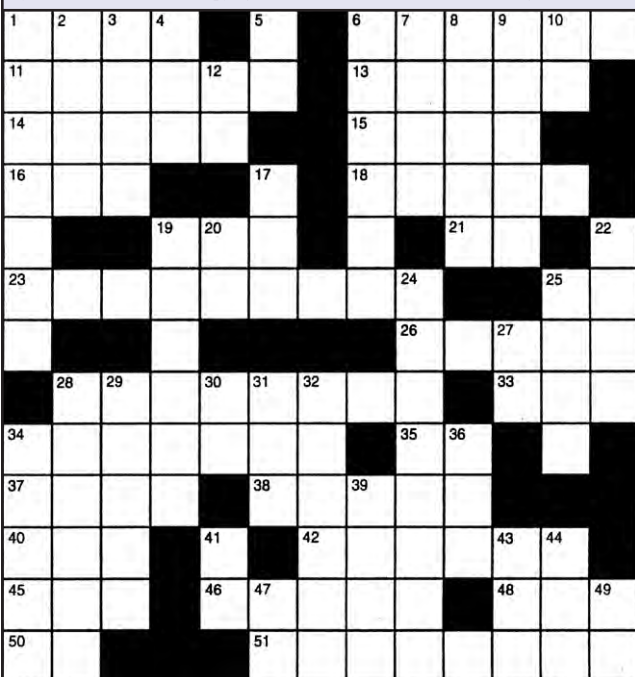
(9-10)

The lame man's healing made a big impression on those in the temple who now saw him walking and praising God. People recognized him as the man who had sat begging for alms at the temple gate, and they were filled with "wonder and amazement" at what had happened to him. Though the text does not say it, we may hope that the temple crowd followed the lead of the formerly lame man after his healing by giving thanks and praise to God.

Notably the apostles shared hope with the lame man, but the man's hope did not lie in them. Peter and John recede from view in verses 9-10, leaving readers with the picture of the healed man praising the One ultimately responsible for his healing.

Christian Crossword

By Joann Horn Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- To request earnestly.
- Except ye ____, ye shall perish. (Luke 13:3)
- What __ thees, Hagar? (Gen. 21:17)
- Daybreak.
- To cook.
- Talking horse.
- Army Transport Service. (abbr.)
- The __ of Kish ... were lost. (1 Sam. 9:3)
- Could.
- Father of Jr.
- As the __ cometh out of the east. (Matt. 24:27)
- Greeting.
- Sackcloth and __. (Luke 10:13)
- Neither be __ of other men's sins. (1 Tim. 5:22)
- He __ the more afraid. (John 19:8)
- Disturb.
- Middle French. (abbr.)
- Medicinal plant.

- Person afflicted with sores.
- The serpent beguiled me, and I did __. (Gen. 3:13)
- Avenge.
- TV brand.
- Ready for sudden action.
- Thy disciples __ and drink. (Luke 5:33)
- Interject to express uncertainty.
- Thy brother __ against thee. (Luke 17:3)

Down

- Moral story.
- Children not accused of __. (Titus 1:6)
- Exclamation of sorrow.
- Opposed to "no."
- __, thou that destroyed the temple. (Mark 15:29)
- My joy might __ in you. (John 15:11)
- Having itching __. (2 Tim. 4:3)
- I __ toward the mark. (Phil. 3:14)
- The __ shall serve the younger. (Rom. 9:12)
- New York (abbr.).
- Tea time. (abbr.)
- No room in the __. (Luke 2:7)
- He rode upon a __. (Ps. 18:10)
- Yesterday __ the seventh hour. (John 4:52)
- Holy __. (Rom. 16:16)
- Robes.
- Cure.
- Housewife. (abbr.)
- __ the word. (2 Tim. 4:2)
- Artery in the heart.
- Lung disease.
- Christ is __. (Col. 3:11)
- Guard.
- Thither.
- Day of the week. (abbr.)
- Keep thyself __. (1 Tim. 5:22)

- Mom.
- Red or Dead.
- Whereas thou __ been forsaken and halted. (Isa. 60:15)
- Lieutenant. (abbr.)
- Technical Sergeant. (abbr.)



'Creative & Energetic'

'Missa Femina' previewed at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church on May 4 with almost 200 female singers and 40 orchestra members as part of the annual Betty Sue Shepherd Memorial Concert.



Photo courtesy of Terre Johnson

Vestavia Hills Baptist music minister Johnson to conduct at Carnegie Hall

By Martine Bates Sharp
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Terre Johnson knows the answer to the old riddle "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" He and the choir at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, along with other voices, have been engaged in "practice, practice, practice" for a late May performance since January.

Johnson, music minister at Vestavia Hills Baptist in Birmingham Baptist Association, will conduct a premiere performance May 26 of his own work, "Missa Femina," at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Included

among the female voices will be several choir members from Vestavia Hills Baptist, along with members of Judson College's chorus and a group from the New Jersey Choral Society.

The composer has written short pieces before, but this is his first extended work. The idea came when Johnson, who also serves as adjunct professor in the music department at Judson, was invited to conduct a concert at Carnegie Hall by a former employer.

"Since I was working with women's voices at Judson, I suggested a concert for women's choir, but then I couldn't find

a suitable piece. I decided I would write something," he said.

Composing the piece took Johnson about two months.

"I thought about what I could do to make it notable and appropriate for feminine voices," he said. The final piece was based on the traditional mass, with added solo sections that gave it a feminine flavor. Solo sections included portions from Deuteronomy and Isaiah in which God describes His care as that of a mother, and from Proverbs 3, in which Wisdom is presented in feminine terms. While the traditional portion is in Latin, the solo parts are in English.

Dedicated by the composer to his mother, Dorothy Johnson from Dothan, "Missa Femina" was previewed at Vestavia Hills Baptist on May 4 with about 200 feminine voices and 40 orchestra members. Singers included the Sanctuary Choir of Vestavia Hills Baptist, the Vestavia Hills High School Choirs, the Judson Singers, the Magic City Choral Society and soloist Sadie Frazier.

The preview was part of the annual Betty Sue Shepherd Memorial Concert to raise money for a scholarship to support local students studying music. The scholarship was established in memory of Shepherd, who died in 2007. She taught piano at Samford University in Birmingham for 50 years and played the organ at Vestavia Hills Baptist for 35 years.

This year's concert raised more than \$9,000 and marked the largest attendance in the history of the church, Johnson said.

The large crowd seemed to enjoy the performance, according to choir member Barbara Vandergriff, who sings in the sanctuary choir.

Captive audience

"It was phenomenal. There was so much clapping — the audience didn't want to stop clapping," Vandergriff said.

Although the preparation was intense, including having to learn to sing the traditional mass in Latin, Vandergriff had only praise for Johnson. "He has endeared himself to the choir. He is creative and energetic," she said. "He makes sure the music is polished."

Although Vandergriff will not be able to travel to New York with the choir from Vestavia, she has high hopes for the performance. "I am praying that it will touch the people who hear it."

This will be Johnson's fourth time to conduct a concert at Carnegie Hall and the first time for the singers from Judson to perform there. Some of his choir members have gone with him on previous trips.

Johnson, who also has served at First Baptist Church, Dothan, and taught at Troy University, has been at Vestavia Hills Baptist for nine and a half years. ❧

Erwin brothers' 'Moms' Night Out' hits theaters



Red carpet premiere

Photo by Bethany Rogers

Andy Erwin, director/editor/producer of 'Moms' Night Out,' and his wife, Mandy, walk the red carpet at the film's Alabama premiere held at AmStar Cinema 14 in Alabaster on May 9. The film opened in seventh place on Mother's Day weekend, earning approximately \$4.2 million, but was ranked third in ticket sales based on the number of theaters where it was shown. Also at the red carpet event were Andy's brother, Jon, who also directed, produced and co-wrote the film; actors Robert Amaya and Kevin Downes; and the film's cinematographer, Kris Kimlin. The Birmingham-based Erwin brothers are known for their films featuring stories of redemption and faith, including 2011's 'October Baby.'

HGTV cancels new television show before first episode after campaign against its Christian hosts

HGTV had announced a new series, "Flip it Forward," planned for October, starring twins David and Jason Benham. In each episode, the brothers would find a fixer-upper and "transform it into their forever home — with a healthy dose of sibling rivalry between the brothers along the way," HGTV announced in April.

But on May 7, quietly, in a tweet, HGTV said the show will not be happening.

According to Towleroad.com, HGTV was alerted to a story by RightWingWatch.org, which called the brothers "anti-gay, anti-choice extremists." A social media campaign quickly took flight to pressure HGTV to cancel the show.

David Benham was reported as having protested against homosexual rights and abortion.

The Benham brothers issued a statement on their Facebook page saying: "The first and last thought on our minds as we begin and end each day is; have we shined Christ's light today? Our faith is the fundamental calling in our lives and the centerpiece of who we are. As Christians we are called to love our fellow man. Anyone who suggests that we hate homosexuals or people of other faiths is either misinformed or lying."

"If our faith costs us a television show then so be it." (RNS)

'Good FAITH'

Mariners' Jones uses baseball as platform to share Christ

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Hitting a home run that he didn't think went out, James Jones ran as hard as he could around the bases. "That was pretty embarrassing," he said. "I thought they were trying to throw me out. They were [throwing] the ball in because it ricocheted off something."

A right fielder for the Jackson (Tenn.) Generals, the 25-year-old Jones ran home a lot in 2013. He scored 44 runs and led the Double-A Southern League in triples with 10. He ranked 29th among its top 100 hitters with a

.275 batting average and had 45 RBI from his 100 hits. He was promoted to Seattle's Triple-A affiliate in the Pacific Coast League, Tacoma, at the end of the 2013 season and began 2014 there.

Called up to the Mariners from April 18 to 20, Jones singled in his MLB debut. And then May 5 he was called back up to the Mariners and was still there at press time.

"I love playing this game. It's a big opportunity to show what a relationship with Christ is all about," he said.

A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., Jones became a believer after his sister Sophia invited him to an Easter service.

"Just listening to the story of Christ and what He did for me; how He died for my sins and made me righteous through what He had done on the cross and His finished work" became the turning point, Jones said. "He wants a personal relationship in the big things and the little things that you don't think He cares about. ... Christ wants to have a relationship rather than me doing stuff for Him. ... He wants to know the ins and outs of me. I love that it is that way."

'Ooze out of you'

"Your relationship with Christ should just ooze out of you naturally to where it becomes a catalyst with other people," he said. "I am a light where everything I do is a reflection of my relationship with Christ. ... My goal is for people to see Christ in me."

Jones had not planned to be an outfielder when he was drafted in the fourth round of the 2009 Major League Draft. A junior, he was a pitcher at Long Island University and hurling 96 mph fastballs. As a sophomore he was ranked 30th in Baseball America's Top 100 college prospects.

The road to Seattle began in Everett, Wash., where he batted .311 and in 2010 was named the Best Outfield Arm in the Mariner's organization. At Class-A Clinton, Iowa, he slammed 12 homers and 10 triples,

scored 87 runs, had 102 hits and batted .269. He sparked Clinton's rebound from a "bad" first half to the league championship game before losing.

Assigned to the Class-A Advanced California League High Desert in 2012, Jones again was on a playoff team. The Mavericks fell in the semifinals.

A line drive hitter, Jones' focus at the plate is to hit the ball hard. "After it leaves my bat, I can't control it. Just keeping that simple plan is what has helped me," he said.

Chris Taylor, a shortstop with Tacoma, said Jones hits the ball consistently and hard in the gaps.

"It helps that he is a pretty fast runner. Triples a lot of times are freak things. You have to have a funny bounce over an outfielder's head. You can't really plan them. Probably the toughest thing to do at the plate is to hit a triple, and he has got a lot of them."

Jones also has had a lot of injuries — a fractured forearm, strained triceps and pulled ligaments — which has been his biggest challenge as well as a turning point in his faith.

"I learned it's not about me — as much as I want to excel in this game — and it's not about what I want to do, it's about what God wants for me," he said. "It's just knowing what His will is for me. It's separating my selfish desires to do His will."

A member of Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, Jones studies the Bible and reads voraciously.

Having "a good circle around me that keeps me in line" also is vital, he said. His favorite Bible verse is 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power, of love and of self-discipline."

While with the Generals, some teammates joined Jones in baseball chapel. First baseman Steven Proscia, who now plays for the Los Angeles Dodgers organization, said Jones' smile, positive attitude and the way he controls his emotions are a reflection of God.

"He knows Someone is watching over him. He knows he has that Person to turn to. We talk about our faith," said Proscia. "It's more about how I feel about Christ being in my life and how I think I am doing everything I can to play for Him."

Brandon Bantz, a former catcher with the Mariners organization now with the Harrisburg affiliate of the Washington Nationals, shares Jones' evangelical faith. They were roommates in 2009.

"You can see James' faith coming out in his personality," Bantz said. "The way he walks around all the time and just the joy that he has. If I could describe him in one word it would be joy. He is always joyful, always smiling. As the Scripture says you will know them because of their joy." ❧



James Jones

Photo by Roger C. Hoover

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

GuideStone investments now open to church members

DALLAS — Southern Baptist and evangelical church members can now invest with GuideStone Funds.

Since its 2001 inception, GuideStone Funds has limited participation to pastors, missionaries and employees of Southern Baptist and evangelical churches and ministries as well as their immediate family members. The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) 2013 amendment of GuideStone's ministry statement to allow the entity to offer its investments, insurance and services to likeminded individuals helped make the change possible.

GuideStone described the change, which went into effect May 5, as an important next step in supporting the company's long-term growth and fulfilling its mission.

Ron Dugan, chief strategic investment officer for GuideStone, said, "We believe that the time is right to make these funds available to a wider Christian audience."

"Having successfully weathered financial storms after September 2001, as well as the economic downturn of 2008–2009, we believe our funds are battle-tested and offer a good approach for values-based investors who want to invest in accordance with their values."

GuideStone Funds is a controlled-affiliate of GuideStone Financial Resources, an entity of the SBC. Originally founded as a relief organization, GuideStone has transitioned into providing employer-sponsored retirement plans, life and health products and property and casualty coverage. In the mutual funds group, GuideStone launched the first Christian-based target-date fund lineup in 2006.

CP contributions at 2.31 percent less than current goal

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) exceeded \$109 million through month seven of the SBC's fiscal year, according to a news release from SBC EC President and Chief Executive Officer Frank S. Page.

The \$109,130,246.98 received by the EC for the first seven months of the fiscal year, Oct. 1 through April 30, for distribution through the Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget represents 97.69 percent of the \$111,708,333.33 year-to-date budgeted amount to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America.

The total is \$633,701.27 or 0.58 percent less than the \$109,763,948.25 received through the end of April 2013 and is 2.31 percent less than the CP goal for the current year.

Designated giving of \$130,745,155.58 for the same year-to-date period is 1.73 percent, or \$2,299,337.68, below the \$133,044,493.26 received at this point in 2013. This total includes only those gifts received and distributed by the EC and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

April's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$14,771,222.53. Designated gifts amounted to \$12,040,184.49. The SBC allocation budget goal for 2013–2014 is \$191,500,000.

'Explore the Bible' study to include young adults, kids

NASHVILLE — Beginning this fall, LifeWay's "Explore the Bible" ongoing curriculum line will expand to include young adults, students and kids.

"Until now, 'Explore the Bible' has been a book-by-book study only for adults," said Toby Jennings, managing editor of the study. "With this expansion, it will become the only curriculum we know that provides book-by-book Bible study for groups of all ages."

Adults and students will study the same passage of Scripture every week. The material for kids will focus on the same concept within the same book as adults and students. They may, however, cross-reference a connected story in Scripture that elaborates on the primary message to make challenging concepts more kid-friendly. Study sessions include engaging discussion questions, in-depth Bible commentary and a comprehensive reading plan for each book of the Bible.

Churches can register to preview the study free for one month at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible.