

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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IMB photo

James Dubuisson (left), a student at the University of North Alabama in Florence and youth minister for FBC Lawrenceburg, Tenn., and Nick Smirniotopoulos (center), a recent graduate of Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, enjoy a friendly soccer match with Brazilian children in Rio de Janeiro.

Impacting NATIONS

Alabama Baptist college students share Christ at 2014 FIFA World Cup

The blond midfielder took the outlet kick from his goalie and in a few clean dribbles moved the ball down the soccer pitch into his opponent's territory. With defenders closing in, he lofted a crossing kick to a teammate near the goal who found the back of the net for a score. There were no flashbulbs or TV cameras, only teammates — children mostly half his size and barefoot — who celebrated and mobbed midfielder Dane Van Ryckeghem as he headed

back down the field. The frenzy of World Cup soccer had nothing on the jubilant Brazilian neighborhood kids playing with United States visitors on a soggy field on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Van Ryckeghem, a student at the University of Alabama, traveled to Brazil with a team of 12 other volunteers with a mission of sharing the love of Christ against the backdrop of the largest sporting event in the world — the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

"I really wanted to spend my summer doing more than just working at a job and then going back to school," Van Ryckeghem said. "I wanted to do something that made a difference and I wanted to see the world."

After hearing about a World Cup-focused International Mission Board (IMB) trip for students during a missions conference, he

knew immediately he was to go to Brazil.

"I absolutely love soccer and love the idea of spending part of my summer in this setting," he said. "This

is a dream come true to be here."

James Dubuisson, a junior at the University of North Alabama in Florence, took the first airplane ride (See 'Living,' page 3)



IMB photo

With the help of a Brazilian Baptist translator (right), University of Alabama student Robert Winslett (center) shares the gospel with a Brazilian who works in an upholstery shop in Rio de Janeiro.

COMMENT

On Being Invited to Church

We go to Digby Baptist Church and tonight we are having a men's choir concert. We would be glad for you to go with us."

That was the response of Joe van Heerden, owner of Come From Away Inn in Digby, Nova Scotia, to my question about what my wife Pat and I should experience during our three days in the quaint fishing village that promotes itself as the "Scallop Capital of the World."

Joe's wife, Sharon, was born and reared in Digby and though she lived many places she could not escape the long family roots that tied her to the village. Her ancestors were Empire Loyalists during the American Revolutionary War. When the British lost the war Sharon's family had to flee their homes in New Jersey and resettle in the wilderness of Nova Scotia. The captain of the ship that brought them to their new home was Admiral Robert Digby of His Royal Majesty's Navy for whom the town is named. His ship was called the Atalanta.

Sharon's family roots go back almost that far in Digby Baptist. It has been the family church home for at least five generations. The church has met in the same building since 1875. Joe has been a member since moving from his native South Africa about 20 years ago. He said he found the church warm and friendly so it was easy for him to invite us to share in the men's choir program that Sunday evening.

Worshipping through music

I am not sure how many inn keepers invite their guests to go to church with them, but I am glad this one did. It was a great evening, much like it would have been in most Alabama Baptist congregations. The experience was not as much about the quality of the music as it was about the joy of worshipping through music and the fervency of faith.

The men's choir was composed of seven senior adult men. They sang such favorites as "The Banner of the Cross," "He Took My Sins Away" and "I Believe in a Hill Called Mount Calvary."



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Pastor Donald Robertson interspersed Bible reading emphasizing Jesus' mission to save sinners and the difference Christ makes in a life. The prayers urged lost people to accept Christ as personal Savior and Christians to be channels of God's blessings.

After the service Pat and I were invited to join the congregation in the church hall for refreshments and a time of fellowship. Like our inn-keeper host, we too found the people warm and friendly. A number of people even had ties to Alabama — family in Tuscaloosa, time spent in Mobile and work connections to Huntsville.

Had I not known better, I would have thought I was in any one of countless Alabama churches across the small towns and countryside of our state. But I was in a United Baptist church. United Baptists are an old established Baptist group located mostly in Eastern Canada although they have some churches in the New England states. Some of their

churches would be called megachurches. Most are more like Digby Baptist, located in villages and towns across the Maritime Provinces.

The men's chorus attracted around 100 people for the Sunday evening worship. Robertson said they have "a few more" on Sunday mornings. That is not a bad record for a community of about 2,000 with numerous churches nearby including other United Baptist churches. I wondered how many Alabama churches would have 100 people on Sunday evening. I also wondered how many churches would even try to have a men's chorus with only seven men.

At age 80, Robertson is retiring at the end of June. A younger man has been called as the next pastor. Some in the church are concerned about the pastoral change. More are concerned

about what the congregation will do for an organist. Mrs. Robertson has been church organist for 20 years. In her late 70s, she played both the organ and the piano with energy and technique that night, moving between the different instruments and musical styles with ease.

Again I wondered how many older servants of God are still going full-speed at Mrs. Robertson's age. Too often one may quit, even when there is no one else to provide the ministry.

Pat and I got back to our waterfront room

in time to see high tide on the Bay of Fundy, which has the highest tides in the world. I believe the local record is 42 feet. The tide is so strong that one town even has a reversible waterfall depending on whether the tide is going in or out.

But the primary memory of that day was not the tide or the natural beauty of the bay. It was the serendipitous experience of a Sunday evening worship service featuring a men's chorus, and we got to experience it because our hosts invited us to go to church with them.

We got to worship with Baptist brothers and sisters outside our traditional Baptist family and see again that Baptists are Baptists most anywhere in the world. And it all happened because someone invited us to go to church with them. It was just another reminder that there is no telling what God will do when we invite someone to go to church with us. 🙏



DIGBY BAPTIST CHURCH

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

MUSLIM STUDENT

This is surely not the message Jesus intended when He said that we should go into the world and preach the gospel. We will send people to the ends of the earth to "win souls for Christ" but not allow a Muslim to attend (Southwestern) Baptist (Theological) Seminary? (See "Talk to the Lord," June 19 issue.) That makes the South-

ern Baptist Convention (SBC) nothing more than a club, which is what so many churches have become and they wonder why the membership is down? And now you have squandered an opportunity to witness to one who may very well have accepted Jesus. Shame on you.

You cannot bring people to Christ when you are exclusive. Christ min-

gled with the sinners and lepers, and the SBC leadership needs to stop sitting in judgment and open their collective minds and hearts to those who are different. How else will you touch their lives? You have made political is- (See 'Letters,' page 10)





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

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IMB photo

Dane Van Ryckeghem (far right), a student at the University of Alabama, leads fellow volunteers in a prayer for two Brazilian young women in a community on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. Van Ryckeghem is part of a team of student volunteers who traveled to Rio to conduct gospel outreach during the FIFA World Cup.

Living out your FAITH

'We're here to share the love of Jesus with anyone and everyone,' Dymond says

(continued from page 1)

of his life to travel to Brazil with the group. As a youth minister for First Baptist Church, Lawrenceburg, Tenn., he said a big part of his decision to come to Brazil was to serve as an example and encouragement to his youth group.

"I've been talking to my youth about being different and showing people [that believers] are different," he said. "So often we go to church but don't act differently. I feel like this [missions trip] is me living that out — showing the kids 'this is how to live out the difference of what Christ has done in your life.'"

Students from the University of Alabama at Birmingham also went on the trip.

After Dubuisson and the rest of the team arrived in Rio de Janeiro, they spent their first days ministering in an impoverished community. They served alongside members of a Brazilian Baptist church by playing with children, helping with a medical clinic and walking through the neighborhoods sharing the gospel with the help of translators.

Lee Dymond, campus minister for Auburn University at Montgomery and leader of the volunteer team, said, "We're here for the World Cup, but more importantly we're here to share the love of Jesus with anyone and everyone we can."

Jordan O'Donnell, a student volunteer from Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, confessed feeling apprehensive at first about sharing the gospel in neighborhoods. But the nervousness quickly diminished, he said.

"It's challenging to share through an interpreter, but it got smoother as we went along,"

O'Donnell said. "I enjoyed the whole experience. It's interesting because sharing about Jesus in America usually gets a negative reaction. But here, walking through the community, everyone responded that they wanted to hear about Jesus — even a couple who had never even heard about Jesus before."

"I'm pumped," O'Donnell said. "I'm ready to get out there and do it again."

The team of students will continue to share the gospel during their two-week stay in Rio. During some of their

outreach, they are partnering with the Brazilian Baptist Home Mission Board in a soccer-themed evangelism strategy to share with fans arriving at Brazil's national stadium for World Cup matches.

Dymond said, "The World Cup is where the nations come to one place. It's our opportunity to share the gospel and hopefully impact not just Brazil but all the nations that are coming to Brazil for the World Cup."

For his team, Dymond said he hopes as the students share the gospel and see people accept Christ, they will be emboldened with the knowledge that "if they can do it here during the World Cup, it will encourage them to [share their faith] when they go back home." (IMB)

To learn more about global missions opportunities for students, visit imbstudents.org.



IMB photo

University of Alabama student Morgan Waters (second from the left) and University of North Alabama in Florence student James Dubuisson (center) visit with Rio de Janeiro residents with the help of translator Gloria Reese (fourth from the left).

Dealing with hunger

Baptists help tackle hunger issue worldwide



Church ministers to South Sudanese fleeing violence with help of IMB, BGR

As a third of South Sudan's population faces starvation, International Mission Board (IMB) personnel and Baptist Global Response (BGR) are partnering with a local church to care for those fleeing ethnic violence.

Nearly 4 million people may starve to death as a result of the country's now five-month-old Civil War, the United Nations reports.

On the first day of 2014, Mary Loso was cooking dinner for her children when the trucks arrived carrying those trying to escape the ongoing fighting. One by one — a total of seven trucks, 150 people — pulled into the Faith Baptist Church compound in Nimule, South Sudan, where the women's leader lives with her husband and 11 children.

Loso panicked. "I was afraid at first," Loso said. "I was afraid there wasn't enough food."

But they were her people and she couldn't turn them away. They were among the hundreds of thousands fleeing their homes in South Sudan because of the violence that began when ethnic fighting broke out in the capital city of Juba.

Spreading the word

Nimule is a border town — a natural stopping point for refugees on their way out of South Sudan, fleeing to Uganda. As the town flooded with those fleeing, word began to spread about Loso's hospitality.

That first day Loso gathered the displaced people together with her family and called the church elders. Church members soon arrived at the compound to pray. Three times a

day they stopped their work to pray together. They prayed for peace in the country, for their lost husbands and brothers and for enough food for the day.

The church took up an offering to buy some food. Eventually some of the families moved onto the church compound, into an open-air sanctuary and into the homes of the pastors.

"All-in-all, God stood strong," Loso said.

On the church compound there is a small office, the size of a pantry or a walk-in closet. Thin foam mattresses are stacked against a wall. Five pastors have been living in the office together. The pastors gave up their own homes on the church compound for the displaced families.

Pastor Tolbert Alochi said, "We took their burdens to be ours — we are crying with them."

"These people, they looked desperate," he said. "No food, no water. Things were very hard."

In the first days of the crisis, Alochi called the elders of the church together and they decided to welcome those in need.

"We told them that if anybody feels that he wants to stay, we can stay with them here. Most of them are not ready to go [across the border to Uganda]. They have lost husbands, they have lost children and they are waiting for them here."

A team of IMB representatives assessing

the situation in South Sudan was moved by the ministry of Faith Baptist and called on BGR to help. Through BGR funding, representatives helped Faith Baptist complete housing for the displaced families.

Mark Hatfield, BGR area director for sub-Saharan Africa, said, "This is an instance

of a church wanting to reach out to an IDP [internally displaced persons] crisis situation and help the community around them. We are thankful to be able to encourage the church to follow their biblical mandate of being a church and in being significant in their community for the kingdom of God."

Despite the fragile ceasefire signed earlier in June many are afraid to return home. With the help of BGR, more than 10 families have been able to remain under the care of the church, while the

church continues reaching out to those who are fleeing the violence.

Alochi said, "We are encouraging them and comforting them with the Word of God. They never believed they would make it up to this far."

On a much larger scale BGR is working to drill four boreholes in refugee camps, as well as provide jerry cans, metal containers typically used for transporting and storing water, for 12,000 families living in the camps. (BP)



BP photo

A displaced woman and her child seek help at Faith Baptist Church, Nimule, South Sudan.

SBC's Global Hunger Relief works in variety of ways to combat hunger

God clearly is on the side of 'the least of these' and the Bible tells us that one day Jesus will ask us face to face about our response to hungry people (Matt. 25)," said Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

With a renewed focus on giving bread — and the Bread of Life — to those who hunger and thirst across North America and the world, the SBC is encouraging support for the newly rebranded Global Hunger Relief (GHR) initiative, formerly the World Hunger Fund.

GHR-funded projects combat hunger in a variety of ways including disaster relief, addressing chronic hunger caused by famine or other reasons, eliminating urban food deserts and helping women rescued from sex trafficking, according to GHR's website, globalhungerrelief.com.

GHR also works to create long-term change in extreme poverty situations by running projects that involve job training, livestock and seeds, farm improvement,

clean water, home reconstruction, medical care and hygiene education.

The projects work in collaboration with North American Mission Board (NAMB) and International Mission Board (IMB) strategies, and donations made to the

fund are distributed according to the formula established by the SBC — 20 percent to NAMB and 80 percent to IMB. To give online to GHR, visit globalhungerrelief.com/giving.

"As Southern Baptists move forward under the new banner of Global

Hunger Relief, we also need a new mindset," Moore said.

"We should ... confront our fear that the problem is so overwhelming that one small group or one church won't be able to make a difference. While it's true that over 1 billion people in the world don't have enough to eat ... Southern Baptists already are sharing bread and the Bread of Life ... because of our hunger gifts.

"Perhaps most important, let's refuse to use our spiritual missions as an excuse to ignore the physical or social realities around us," Moore said. (TAB, BGR)

World Hunger Sunday is Oct. 12.

Please pray ...

- ▶ For Faith Baptist members as they continue showing the love of Christ to IDPs in their midst.
- ▶ For IMB representatives and national pastors working together in the South Sudanese refugee camps.

To learn more about how to help, visit gobgr.org/projects/project_detail/south-sudan-crisis.

Food insecurity among seniors

Nearly 4 million older Americans go hungry each day, analysis shows

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The economic crash of 2008 has had many lasting consequences, but perhaps one of the most alarming is the steady increase in the number of American seniors who go hungry each day.

Nearly 4 million older Americans experience food insecurity daily, according to a recently released analysis by the Christian advocacy organization Bread for the World.

Though federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) have helped slow the increase in hunger among older adults, the study suggests that without intervention the number of hungry seniors could increase by 50 percent in the coming years.

Increase in hunger

In Alabama more than 1 in 5 seniors are at risk for hunger, the third highest rate in the country. The national average is 15.2 percent, according to the 2013 annual report of the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. Those living in states in the South and Southwest, those who are racial or ethnic minorities and those who are ages 60–69 face the greatest likelihood of food insecurity. However, the majority of seniors facing the threat

of hunger are white with incomes above the poverty line, according to the report.

According to Neal Morrison, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Senior Services, Alabama historically has a high poverty rate, but he attributes some of the food insecurity among seniors to the recession.

“Alabama has a growing population of people age 65 and older and a lot of seniors lost much of their retirement savings when the stock market crashed in 2008,” Morrison said.

According to Morrison, approximately 101,000 Alabamians age 60 and older live at or below the poverty level. Services provided by a network of 365 senior centers throughout the state allow one-third of seniors to receive a daily hot meal during the week at a cost of roughly \$3 per meal. The rest, more than 60,000 seniors, often go unreached and unfed.

Many factors are at play when it comes to seniors and hunger. Many seniors refuse to apply for programs like SNAP because they see it as a “handout,” Beckmann said. About 55,000 senior adults in Alabama receive an

average of \$100 monthly in SNAP benefits, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Programs like the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, a state-administered federal program that provides vouchers that can be used at local farmers markets, help a little but those funds go fast. In 2013, Alabama received \$1.62 million for the program. According to the website of the Alabama Farmers Market Authority (fma.alabama.gov), the 2014 program has already reached the maximum number of applicants. Applications for 2015 begin the first week in January.

Baptist ministries around the state are involved in ministries in their communities that serve the hungry, including seniors.

For example, staff and volunteers of the food services ministry at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, serve more than 25,000 meals each year to the homebound. First Baptist Church, Prattville, in Autauga Baptist Association provides volunteers for Meals on Wheels during the month of March each year.

Though not limited to seniors, the North

To learn more about how to help hungry seniors in Alabama, contact Neal Morrison at 334-242-4985.



123rf.com

American Mission Board provides \$60,000 annually to the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions for distribution to hunger relief efforts. Many associational ministries benefit from these funds, including the food ministry of Washington Baptist Association; the Wings of Grace Ministry Center at Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa; and the Cleburne Christian Service Center (CCSC) food ministry.

For both state-funded programs and local ministries, the biggest need is more funds, which is why Morrison encourages donations of money and volunteer hours.

“I firmly believe that if we can get the right partners in place, we can at least stay on top of this problem,” Morrison said. ☞

The Bread for the World analysis, “Keeping the Dream Alive: Hunger by the Numbers Among Older Americans,” is available at www.bread.org.

Birmingham-area churches partner to assist those in need through Serving You

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In 2009, members of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, found themselves running into an issue that’s common to many churches — feeling overwhelmed at the thought of navigating and managing the church’s benevolence portion of its ministry. Though they had an in-house ministry in place, they felt God was calling them to start something bigger.

And now churches across Birmingham are joining in and helping make the ministry even larger.

“Initially we started the ministry as an offshoot of the church as an auxiliary ministry,” said John Herring, executive pastor of NorthPark Baptist. “We thought this would be a great opportunity to get other churches involved, and once it was established we quickly saw that it would be something that churches would want to participate in.”

There were initially a handful of churches represented on Serving You’s six-member board, and they started out by trying to gain funding to help provide things like food, clothing and utility bill payments to people in need. The board came up with a monthly budget used to help anyone who visited the center, housed in modular trailers in NorthPark’s parking lot.

Serving You’s Executive Director John Gibson said the ministry serves 10 ZIP codes in the northeast Birmingham area.

“People come in and fill out paperwork and then we interview them, kind of get their story,” he said. “We don’t want to enable somebody — we want to help someone who’s

Serving You partners

- ▶ ABC Trust Foundation
- ▶ Baptist Health Foundation
- ▶ The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham
- ▶ Christ Church, Trussville
- ▶ Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay
- ▶ CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville
- ▶ Eastern Women Junior Committee
- ▶ FBC Center Point
- ▶ Daniel Foundation
- ▶ Hewitt-Trussville High School
- ▶ Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point
- ▶ Hopewell Baptist Church, Pinson
- ▶ Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover
- ▶ McSweeney Foundation
- ▶ NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville (see story, page 6)
- ▶ Walmart Foundation

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going through a circumstance in their life.”

Those circumstances can range from dealing with a serious medical condition to going through a divorce to the unexpected loss of a job and more.

But there was more that the Serving You team wanted to address, so they brought Gibson on as executive director and he helped introduce an outreach to assist other populations

in need, like the elderly or children who often don’t have enough food to eat over weekends and summers when they’re not given meals at school.

“We’re trying to find ways to meet needs,” Gibson said. “We do block parties in transient areas, trying to share Christ with them, since normally 85 percent of people in apartment complexes are unchurched.”

The ministry also has a group of volunteers who put together bags with various essential items, and the Serving You team members keep a few bags in their cars at all times to offer to homeless people they encounter.

One advantage to Serving You not being affiliated with a church and instead being its own nonprofit is that the ministry is eligible for foundation money. They’ve received funding from United Way, the Walmart Foundation, Baptist Health System and more.

“When somebody dials 2-1-1, which is the helpline of Alabama, they are asked for their ZIP code and then are given a list of places that can help them,” Gibson said. “We get lots of people from the 2-1-1 helpline in our area, but we also get people who come into our various member churches looking for help.”

Serving You is able to centralize and monitor requests from all connected churches — something that becomes helpful in avoiding people who might be trying to scam the system.

The need for an outreach like Serving You has only grown, and so beginning July 7 the

ministry will have a satellite site in Hoover, located in the parking lot of Hunter Street Baptist Church, which will initially be open Mondays, 9 a.m. to noon.

Callie Priest, a member of The Church at Brook Hills and now a Serving You board member, said, “We have always known about Serving You, but in the last few months ... [the need has been a] bit overwhelming. When churches talk about benevolence that’s kind of twofold. You have people in your faith family you have to care for, but there are those in your community as well, and Serving You handles the community part really well — often things that churches aren’t able to do as well because they’re trying to help with its faith family.”

Looking forward

Priest said she’s looking forward to watching Serving You continue to grow as its current partnerships strengthen and new ones emerge.

Gibson said the goal is to have a ministry center in the Roebuck area, housing other nonprofits under one roof.

“We want to create a families-in-need center where [families] can come and get job training, child care and tutoring, etc.,” he said. “Serving You is helping immediate needs, both spiritual and physical, but we also want to start an afterschool kids program that will educate them, give one-on-one tutoring, feed them a hot meal, let them have classes like dance, etc., that they wouldn’t normally get.” ☞

For more details about Serving You, visit ServingYou.org or find them on Facebook.

'Incredible tools'

NorthPark members receive Bibles geared to guide readers through plan of salvation in conjunction with Serving You

To further the mission of Serving You (see story, page 5), NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, leaders distributed New Testament Bibles to all its members during services June 8.

However, these are no ordinary Bibles. They are the "Time to Revive" New Testament Bible, published by Life Bible Study.

What makes these Bibles unique is the six numbered tabs that guide readers through the plan of salvation.

The first five tabs lead readers to highlighted verses that explain the sin of man, the sacrifice of Jesus and the saving power of grace.

The sixth tab is a "what's next" section for new disciples in Christ to help them understand the commitment they made and show them ways to grow in their new faith.

NorthPark Baptist Pastor Bill Wilks said the Bibles are "incredible tools" to aid Christians in the practice of "lift up your eyes evangelism."

"[Lift up your eyes evangelism] is an intentional way to live your life," he said. "We need to open our eyes and see the opportunities around us ... to impact our city, Birmingham and surrounding areas with the good news of Jesus Christ."

Using the example of Jesus ministering to the woman at the well, Wilks encouraged congregants to purposely seek out openings to share the message of salvation.

Christians often make up surface excuses to



For more information on the 'Time to Revive' New Testament Bible, visit www.lifebiblestudystore.com/TTRBible/.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

avoid the discomfort of possible rejection, he explained. Through Serving You ministry opportunities, Christians can show the love of Christ in practical ways while learning how to be intentional witnesses.

"It's outside the walls, touching the lives [and] sharing News — that's what Jesus intended us to be," Wilks said. (Maggie Walsh)



Berry's New Hope celebrates 125th anniversary

New Hope Baptist Church, Berry, celebrated its 125th anniversary June 1 at 10 a.m.

During the service, Pastor Ed Steelman gave the welcome and Mark Bishop sang several songs. Senior deacon Larry Rhinehart introduced the Sipsey Baptist Association church's previous pastors — three who were in attendance.

Max Stripling, former director of missions for Sipsey Association who also is a former pastor of New Hope Baptist, delivered the message. Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a certificate.

Patty Woodham, who served on the anniversary's book committee, presented the newly printed anniversary book of the church's history during the service and delivered a brief history of the church.

Afterward, everyone enjoyed further fellowship during lunch. Woodham noted the entire day was special.

Steelman said four people joined the church and two people made professions of faith that day. "Our church has really grown and we have a lot of young couples," he noted. "It's a great church, a real sweet spirit. ... They just love the Lord." (Julie Payne)

Huntsville's Sherwood Baptist marks 50 years

Sherwood Baptist Church, Huntsville, marked its half-century in ministry May 4 with about 300 people in attendance.

According to church secretary Dannie Wilson, Pastor Don Paris gave a welcome and Neil Glausier, the first pastor of the Madison Baptist Association church, delivered the morning prayer.

Former music director Shawn Fargerson directed the music during the service and sang an anthem.

Daniel Edmonds, director of the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, delivered the message and presented a plaque to the church on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Wilson noted a covered dish lunch followed the service. During lunch, a video presentation featured the church's history.

Paris said, "It was a glorious day. I had the opportunity to meet many former members and staff members, and it was very gratifying to hear from them all how much Sherwood Baptist had meant to them through the years." (Julie Payne)

Judson Association shares love through teddy bear ministry



Photo courtesy of Judson Baptist Association

The Judson Baptist Association Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and Men's Ministries joined forces to collect teddy bears and present them to law enforcement agencies in Henry County to be given to children in times of need. Pictured (left to right) during the presentation of the first collection of teddy bears are Gary Clements of the Men's Ministries; Marlos Walker, chief of police, Abbeville; Will Maddox, sheriff of Henry County; and Sara Pitchford and Charlotte Doster of the Judson WMU. Teddy bears also were presented to Mark Jones, chief of police, Headland.



Kenneth L. "Ken" Chambless Jr. Turnerville pastor Chambless dies at 66

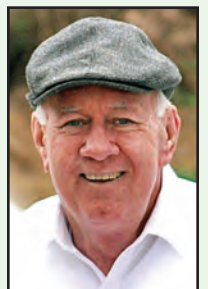
Kenneth L. "Ken" Chambless Jr., pastor of Turnerville Baptist Church, Chunchula, in Mobile Baptist Association died June 12. He was 66.

A native of Mobile, Chambless was a veteran of the United States Air Force and was formerly stationed at Chandler Air Force Base in Minnesota.

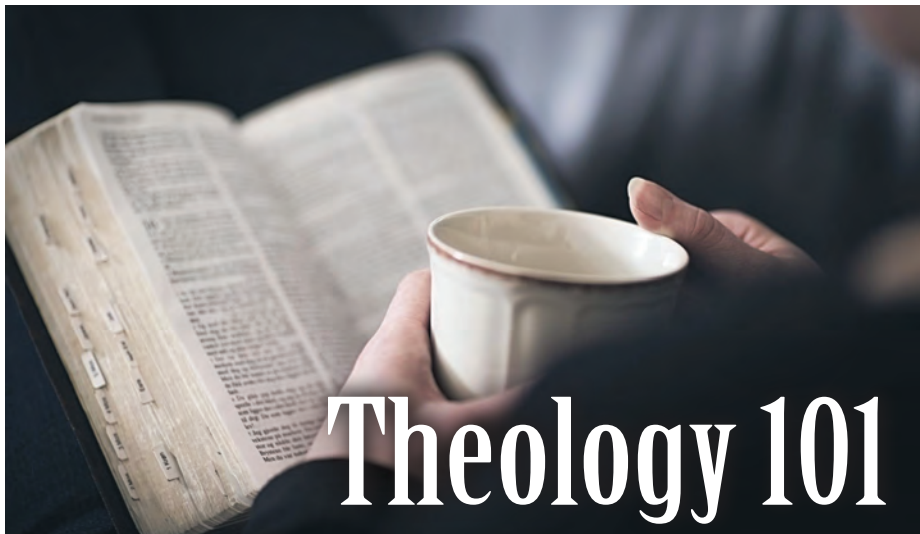
He was a Mobile County deputy sheriff for eight years and served in the ministry for 40 years. He served for 12 years as pastor of Turnerville Baptist, and while there he began the Faith Riders Motorcycle Ministry.

"Ken Chambless loved serving the Lord through Turnerville Baptist Church," said Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Association, noting Chambless faithfully served on associational committees. "His funeral gave evidence of the impact on eternity that came from his ministry here."

Chambless is survived by his wife of 44 years, Jane, three children and one grandson. (TAB)



CHAMBLESS



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Holy Spirit

Paraclete Promises (Part 3 of 4)

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

Having made two references to the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete in John 14, Jesus gave a third Paraclete promise in John 15:26–27. He made a Trinitarian connection by saying that the Spirit would be sent by the Son from the Father (v. 26). This is precisely what Peter explained in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out upon the waiting disciples. “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing” (Acts 2:33). The exalted Son was pouring out what the Father was sending.

Sent to bear witness

Having earlier assured the disciples that the Spirit would have a teaching ministry, as we saw last week, Jesus added that the Spirit also would have a witnessing ministry. The focus of the Spirit’s witness is Christ. Jesus put it this way, “He will bear witness about Me” (John 15:26).

The Holy Spirit does not seek the limelight. He is among us and within us not to exalt Himself. Sometimes Jesus’ followers elevate the Spirit to a prominence that the Spirit neither desires nor seeks. Rather when we honor the Holy Spirit in His assigned role, we find the Spirit directing our attention to Christ. If we make much of the Spirit, and we should, we will make much of

Jesus in our living, teaching and witnessing.

Witnessing partnership

Not only does the Spirit bear witness to Christ, Jesus added, “And you also will bear witness” (John 15:27). The earliest human witnesses were the disciples, who had been with Jesus “from the beginning.” They had watched Him and listened to Him. They had learned from His words and His works. Jesus inaugurated the Church’s human witness through those disciples. The apostles understood their responsibility and opportunity to be Christ’s witnesses, according to the summary description of their work in Acts 4:33 — “And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.”

Not only were the original disciples to be witnesses, every believer is a witness. This is not an option; we are witnesses. The only variable is the kind of witnesses we are — positive or negative, faithful or negligent. Just as the Twelve bore witness to what they had seen and heard, so we are to bear witness to our personal experience with the Savior. Thus Jesus envisioned a witnessing partnership composed of both the human (believers) and the divine (the Spirit). One of the high honors of being Christians is that of being in a witnessing partnership with the Holy Spirit, seeking to call attention to Jesus in order that others may know Him as Savior.

Interestingly the Bible ends with an invitation for people to come to Christ. That invitation must be issued by the human-divine partnership. Revelation 22:17 puts it like this, “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’” The Bride is the Church. The Spirit is the Paraclete promised by Jesus. It is a dual witness that invites people to come to the Savior. The Church cannot effectively invite people to Christ apart from the divine Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will not usually invite people to Christ without the human instruments who partner with Him to say, “Come.”

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.



FBC Athens burglarized

Thief hits after youth fundraiser

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

First Baptist Church, Athens, has been dealt a double blow in recent days. First the steeple of its mission church, First Hispanic Baptist Church located on North Madison Street in Athens, was damaged in strong thunderstorms the evening of June 9 (see story in the June 19 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*).

Then just a day later on June 10, First, Athens, suffered another setback when its church building was burglarized during the evening hours.

According to Keith Smyser, minister of education and administration for First, Athens, it remains unclear how the burglar initially entered the building but it appeared the burglar did not use forcible entry.

Smyser said that once inside, the burglar used a dolly to smash open the church office door and took one of the office’s desktop computer towers.

The burglar also entered Smyser’s office to grab a souvenir baseball bat that was displayed and used it to break into the financial office where a small amount of cash was taken.

The church offices where the items were stolen are located in an older house connected to the church building, Smyser explained, adding the burglary most likely happened sometime after 9 p.m.

First, Athens, discovered the incident the following morning, and the church has been working with the Athens Police Department ever since. Smyser said police have identified the suspect with the help of the

church’s video surveillance footage, but at press time the suspect’s name had not been released.

Smyser said the church doesn’t expect its stolen items to be returned, but he expressed gratefulness that “all tithes and offerings ... had been deposited in the bank” before the burglary happened. He added the church had just conducted a major fundraiser for a youth missions trip and “fortunately all of that (money) had been deposited.”

For churches looking to take precautions to protect themselves against this type of incident, Smyser noted that while security cameras aren’t necessarily a total deterrent for thieves, they can potentially make them think twice before committing a crime.

Good policies

He also said First, Athens, has good policies in place with regard to depositing its offerings quickly. He noted churches should “look at how they do their offerings in the sense that they don’t want to have a lot of money onsite that could create potential break-ins. ... I think it’s real important for churches to handle the monies and get those into safe places as quickly as possible.”

Chip Smith, an associate in the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, noted that church security is a broad area of concern involving four major components: property and attendees, minors, financial and transportation. While nothing is foolproof for a determined criminal, Smith offered churches tips for helping secure their facilities (see tips below).

TIPS for securing church facilities

1. Use thorny or prickly plants (holly bushes) under first floor windows to make break-ins more difficult (don’t allow the bushes to obstruct the view from the windows and doors).
2. Use fences and screens to control property access.
3. Parking lots should be visible from the street.
4. Patrol parking lots and grounds during services and activities.
5. Lighting is one of the best and least expensive ways to deter burglars and vandals with sufficient illumination to deter them.
6. Put lighting at doors, windows, skylights or any other areas of entry.
7. Protect outside lights with a cover so bulbs can’t be easily broken.
8. Keep property clear of rubbish.
9. Lock all doors and keep track of the keys.
10. Develop a Neighborhood Watch.
11. Regularly check for places of illegal entry (easy access to the roof where one can climb without a ladder).
12. Train those responsible for the facilities to know the ways to protect the buildings.
13. Leave on some interior lighting for law enforcement patrols.
14. Consider electronic security systems to alert and monitor.
15. Designate one person to lock and secure the building at the end of each activity.

(Information courtesy of Chip Smith, associate in the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions)

Westerhouse honored at COSBE meeting



Photo by Wayne Westerhouse

Leon Westerhouse (center), member of Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham, and a full-time music evangelist, was recognized for 50 years in evangelism ministry at the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (COSBE) meeting at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 10 in Baltimore, Md. Eric Ramsey, outgoing COSBE president (left) presented Westerhouse with a plaque during the COSBE meeting.

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

REFLECTIONS

"THERE'S NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT!"



Ministry T

Samford University's seminary-type extension classes

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

There was a time you would have been hard pressed to find an Alabama Baptist pastor who had not attended — or at least knew about — seminary-type extension classes through Samford University in Birmingham.

In fact, the extension ministry, originally known as The Howard Plan, quickly became the model for the Southern Baptist Convention after it launched as the first-of-its-kind program in the nation in 1947.

And while accreditation standards changed the dynamics and large student enrollment of the program in the late 1950s, it has remained a consistent training force across the state in more than 20 locations, including five prisons.

As the program heads into the upcoming fall semester, it will have a new name and a new director — Ministry Training Institute led by Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations.

"These are seminary-type courses on a certificate level," said Blackwell, interim pastor of Vaughn

Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, and president of the upcoming Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference. "It provides an opportunity to enrich our churches in a tremendous way. It not only trains pastors who have not had an opportunity to go to seminary, but it also provides a place for Sunday School teachers, church leaders and individual church members to deepen their scriptural knowledge.

"We are using the same textbooks I used in seminary," he said. "My dream is to train hundreds of people for the gospel ministry."

Blackwell holds a bachelor of arts in biblical studies from Samford and a master of divinity and doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland noted the new church relations position indicates his per-

sonal commitment to the effort.

"Even though the name has changed, the commitment remains the same," Westmoreland said. "In fact, I view what we are doing here as even taking a step beyond what we've done in the past."

"The [institute] has tremendous value. ... My dream is to train hundreds of people for the gospel ministry."

**Kevin Blackwell
assistant to the president
for church relations,
Samford University**

Samford also has absorbed all funding for the program, which originally received an allotment from the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

"In the past we have enjoyed financial support from the convention, but times have become difficult for convention budgets, and I understand those

pressures," Westmoreland said. "But even with reduced funding for the program, Samford is determined to do everything we can to continue this outreach to Alabama Baptists."

The extension program has had a variety of directors throughout its history, including Jim Pounds, who most recently led the program for nearly 15 years as part of his work with Samford's Beeson Divinity School.

"I remain grateful for Jim's careful stewardship of the program and am grateful for how he has worked closely with Kevin in the transi-

Carey Association event sees 15 choose Christ



Photo courtesy of Rusty Taylor

Carey Baptist Association held a Wild Game Supper in mid-March with Terry Chupp, retired B.A.S.S. Bassmaster Pro fisherman and former chaplain for B.A.S.S., as guest speaker. Held in Lineville Baptist Church's family ministry center, 140 men and boys attended, 15 people gave their lives to Christ and 20 people rededicated their lives to Christ. Bruce Willis is director of missions for Carey Association.

How it all

The earliest Baptist pastors in Alabama who had generally not had the primary education. Some areas of the state had any formally trained pastors through the 19th century. Numerous academies were established in Alabama to help with training.

"In the 1904 meeting of the (Alabama Baptist) State Convention, A.J. Moncrief, of Birmingham, introduced a resolution calling for the establishment of an annual summer school for the benefit of the pastors. ... Before the summer of 1912 it was decided to make the summer activities an annual event. ... From the summer preachers' school, a group of winter schools was developed as part of the state.

"In 1916 (Howard College professor) Chapman made a motion that a definite plan be worked out for the preachers' school.

Training Institute

Classes train pastors, teachers, laypeople

tion,” Westmoreland noted.

“Kevin is uniquely prepared to provide this service through Samford to Alabama Baptists,” he said. “He has a heart for reaching lost people for Christ. He is vitally interested in church renewal and revitalization. He has come to occupy leadership positions over the past several years in state convention work. All of this combined with his Samford background and his interest in higher education make him well qualified to serve in this position.”

Blackwell said the extension classes are affordable and accessible. All Alabama Baptists have access to one of the extension centers in the state (see sidebar graphic), and the cost is \$50 per class. While courses can be taken at will, a student must complete 30 course hours to earn a certificate. The certificate hours are to be earned through six core classes and four elective classes.

Class locations

The classes are held in churches and associations and are taught by area pastors with appropriate credentials and seminary training.

“Most of our centers are in areas where our churches are struggling,” Blackwell said. “The center directors decide which classes and schedules work best for their area.”

James Preachers, director of missions for Sardis Baptist Association, has directed the center in New Brockton at the Coffee Baptist Association office since 1977.

“I’ve always seen a gap and a need in Sunday School teachers being prepared to teach,” he said. “I got involved with the extension center because I had a desire to see quality in Sunday School classrooms and disciples. I felt a keen calling to get involved in trying to change the situation.”

Resource for Bible teachers

Most students who attend are pastors, aspiring pastors, laypeople who desire theological education and Sunday School teachers, he said, noting, “For some this is the only higher education they’ve had.”

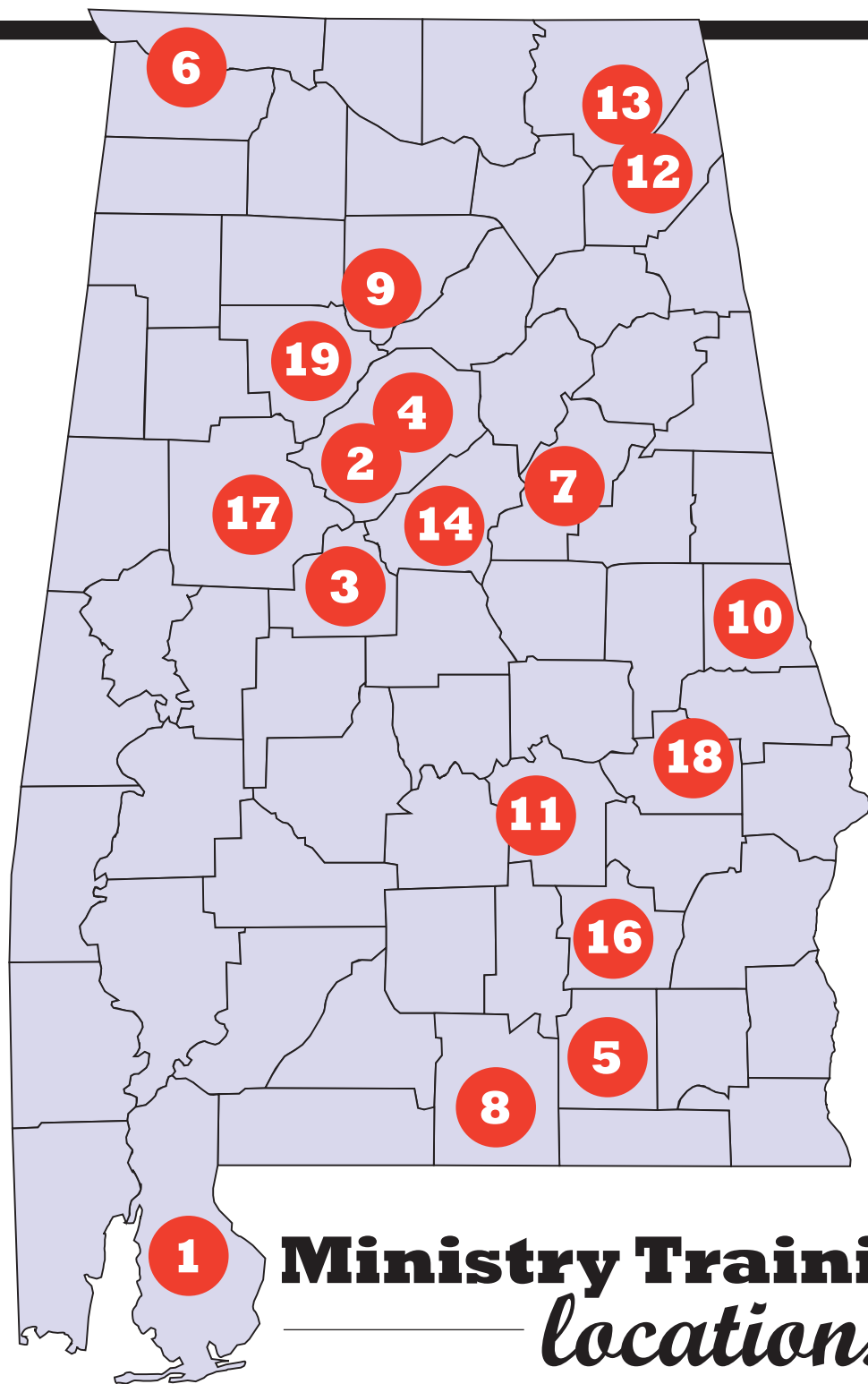
Blackwell added, “The Ministry Training Institute has tremendous value to our churches, associations, conventions and directors of missions.

“Directors of missions have seen the value of using the Ministry Training Institute to give affordable and accessible education opportunities to the ministers in their association who have little theological or ministry education,” he said. “And that concept can be wed with the Samford name, a quality institution of higher learning — quality with a practical nature.

“You could argue that we have a seat at the table on a world stage.”

Most classes begin the last week of August and the deadline for registering is two weeks prior to the first class.

For more information, visit www.samford.edu/go/mti or call Blackwell at 205-726-4055. (Maggie Walsh contributed)



Note: There are centers located in five prisons in the state.

Ministry Training locations

- 1. Baldwin Baptist Association:** 15840 Silverhill Avenue, Silverhill, AL 36576
- 2. Flint Hill Baptist Church:** 1630 Powder Plant Road, Bessemer, AL 35022
- 3. Bibb Baptist Association:** 1055 Montgomery Hwy, Centreville, AL 35042
- 4. Samford University:** 800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209
- 5. Coffee Baptist Association:** 1503 W Adams Avenue, Enterprise, AL 36330
- 6. Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association:** 3901 Hatch Blvd, Sheffield, AL 35660
- 7. Coosa River Baptist Association:** 28344 County Road 21, Talladega, AL 35160
- 8. Covington Baptist Association:** 1200 Valley View Drive, Andalusia, AL 36421
- 9. West Cullman Baptist Association:** 580 County Road 1184, Cullman, AL 35057
- 10. East Liberty Baptist Association:** 12087 Veterans Memorial Parkway, Lafayette, AL 36862
- 11. Montgomery Baptist Association:** 20 Interstate Park Drive, Montgomery, AL 36109
- 12. DeKalb Baptist Association:** 218 Parker Avenue SE, Rainsville, AL 35986
- 13. Sand Mountain Baptist Association:** 150 County Road 60, Pisgah, AL 35765
- 14. Concord Baptist Church:** 11215 County Road 22, Calera, AL 35040
- 15. Southeast Regional Institute:** 350 North Donmoor, Baton Rouge, LA 70808 (southeast regional location — not pictured on the map)
- 16. Trinity Baptist Church:** 101 St. Paul Street, Troy, AL 36081
- 17. Tuscaloosa Baptist Association:** 4300 Hwy 69 North, Northport, AL 35473
- 18. Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association:** 3004 County Road 27, Tuskegee, AL 36083
- 19. First Baptist Church, Jasper:** 1604 4th Avenue, Jasper, AL 35501

For information about these locations, call Kevin Blackwell at 205-726-4055. (Samford University)

I began ... history notes

Alabama were men of privilege of fortune were without most of the were organized

hope and motion that this would be placed on such a level that credit could be given by Howard College (now Samford University) and the seminary at Louisville, Ky. (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary).”

In 1942, Gilbert Guffin, pastor at the time of First Baptist Church, Jasper, partnered with Walker College in a similar educational program for pastors called Baptist Seminar at Walker College. It grew in popularity with each semester.

Also during the early 1940s, extension efforts at Howard College continued, and Guffin’s program in Walker County caught the attention of convention leaders. By 1946 the Howard extension program was birthed along the lines of the Walker County program and Guffin was hired as the director.

(Information pulled from “The Extension Ministry of Samford University” by F. Wilbur Helmbold)

or) James H. site curriculum ools. It was his

Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago June 1964

Convention Features Alabama Church: Chisholm Baptist Church, Montgomery, was featured as one of the outstanding churches of the Southern Baptist Convention at the convention's annual meeting in Atlantic City. In 21 months, the Sunday School has added 800 new people to its rolls, an average of about eight per Sunday. One hundred eighty-eight have been baptized in to the fellowship of the church during these months. Pastor Cameron E. Bryant attended the convention and witnessed the feature and testimony of the church. Pat Ozment Sr., Sunday School superintendent; Melvin J. Olds, chairman of the deacons; and Ernestine Owen,

church secretary, share in leading in the development of the church.

40 Years Ago June 1974

Outstanding Crusade: Eight hundred and forty-four professions of faith were reported during the recent eight-day James Robinson Walker County Crusade in Jasper, according to Walter G. Nunn, crusade chairman. There were 581 other decisions. Total attendance for the crusade reached 30,000 and, according to Jasper Police Chief J.G. Gant, 5,500 attended the closing night. More than 100 churches representing 25 religious denominations were reflected in the attendance and decisions. Tommy Briggs, pastor of New Prospect

Baptist Church, served as administrative vice chairman.

30 Years Ago June 1984

New Executive Director Named: Beverly Sutton, interpretation section director for Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), has been named executive director of WMU of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. She will replace Mary Essie Stephens, who retires June 30 after 30 years of service at the helm of Alabama WMU. Sutton's election was announced in a meeting of the WMU executive committee in Montgomery with Carolyn Miller, of Huntsville, presiding. Camilla Lowery, of Auburn, was chairman of the search committee.

20 Years Ago June 1994

National Acteens Convention: Birmingham hosted nearly 14,000 Acteens for the 1994 National Acteens Convention (NAC) June 21-24. NAC, an event held every five years, featured missionary speakers and contemporary Christian musicians. Alabamians were prominent in the general sessions, Bible studies and special interest conferences. Alabamian Julie Smith from Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham, was named an Acteens Top Teen.

10 Years Ago June 2004

Alabama Native Elected SBC President: Alabama native Bobby Welch was elected Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president June 15. He defeated North Carolina pastor Al Jarrell in the first contested presidential election in a decade. Welch received almost 80 percent of the votes. Welch said he wanted to encourage the SBC to baptize a million people each year. Welch was baptized by Dan Ireland after coming home from the Vietnam War. Welch has previously served as president of the Florida Baptist Convention and vice president of the SBC. Messengers also elected Gerald Davidson as first vice president and David Gill as second vice president.

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

sues of homosexuality and everything else. It is as if you have forgotten that the Bible also preaches against fornication and adultery, and how many of us are guilty of those sins but are welcomed through the doors every Sunday?

Carole Tindoll Weldon
Montgomery, Ala.

NURSING HOMES

When someone in our church is

in the hospital the pastor, deacons and church members drive miles to give comfort to that person and their family. I don't have a problem with that. That is what we should do. I would expect them to visit me.

What I do have a problem with is when our loved ones are in a nursing home we don't drive across town to visit them. Even family members tend to forget their loved ones. I guess I just ex-

pect more from our church family.

A nursing home is just a home away from home. I have never known of a person who wants to live in one; but tomorrow any of us could be a resident. This is great missions work right [at] our front door and we just don't realize it.

Name withheld by request



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: Shorterville Baptist Church, Shorterville, Ala., is a loving, rural congregation seeking a full-time pastor. The church is located between Dothan, Ala., and Eufaula, Ala., and just east of Abbeville, Ala. Please contact Jimmy Mobley, P.O. Box 27, Shorterville, AL 36373. 334-585-5735 or 334-790-6873.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Parkway Baptist Church in Goodlettsville, Tenn., a suburb of Nashville, is seeking a full-time minister of music. Resumes may be sent to: ken@parkwaybc.net.

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 resume: meekbaptist@att.net. www.meekbc.com.

STUDENT MINISTER: Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, Ala., is now accepting resumes for a full-time student minister. Please submit resumes or questions by email to: info@circlewood.org.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS: Union Hill Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of students (grades 1-12). Resumes may be sent to: P.O. Box 823, Oneonta, AL 35121 or bbarnett@otelco.net.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS: Capitol Heights Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a part-time minister of students (grades 7-12) position. Resumes may be sent to: 2514 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36107 or emailed

to: chbccherie@capitolheights.org.

PASTOR FOR STUDENT DISCIPLESHIP: Crawford Baptist Church of Mobile, Ala., is now accepting resumes for a full-time pastor for student discipleship. Please submit resumes or questions by email to: searchcbc@comcast.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

PRESIDENT/TREASURER: The Board of Trustees of the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, Inc., announces the formation of a committee to select the ministry's president/treasurer elect. The Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, Inc., cares for children in crisis in residential care at five locations across Tennessee and a state-wide foster care program. The president/treasurer provides leadership and general supervision to this 123-year-old ministry as approved and directed by the Board of Trustees. Applications and nominations are being accepted during June and July. To be considered, all applications and nominations must be received by the close of business Thursday, July 31. For detailed information regarding qualifications, skills and position duties, as well as the TBCH employment application, please see www.tbch4kids.org/presidentialsearch.html. Interested candidates are requested to complete the TBCH employment application and forward it to: president@tbch4kids.org or mail to: President/Treasurer Search, P.O. Box 2206, Brentwood, TN 37024.

PIANIST: Clearview Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., is seeking a pianist. Please contact the church office at 205-854-

2027 or connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

BUSINESS

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CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

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Want to know God?

Pastor Clarke Skelton
Valley Grande Baptist Church

Children's Sunday School teacher taught a lesson about God's love. After the lesson, she instructed the children to draw a picture and asked one little girl what she was drawing. Immediately the little girl said, "I am drawing a picture of God." The teacher responded kindly, "But no one knows what God looks like." Undaunted the little girl replied, "Well, they will now."

Many people wonder what God looks like. Although the Bible never gives us a physical description of God, it does answer the question of what God is like. John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and lived for a while among us" (John 1:1, 14). In this passage the "Word" that John mentions is Jesus Christ. Jesus is God who left heaven's glory to be born as a baby in a manger and died on a cross to show us what God is like.

Just before He was crucified, Jesus told His disciples that He was going away but they knew the way to the place where He was going. In frustration, Thomas cried out, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way" (John 14:5). Jesus responded, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

If we want to understand who God is we must look at Jesus. Jesus is the divine Son of God who shows us who God is and also shows us the only way that we can "know Him."

Do you want to know God? John 3:16 sums up how we can "know God." "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." You can only "know God" by believing that God loves you enough to give His only Son to die for you and deciding to follow Jesus.

"Knowing God" is a lifelong process of trusting Jesus Christ and following Him. "Knowing God" is the journey that I have chosen, and if you want to "know God" I invite you to join me on that journey.

About Alabama

BY JIM WILLIAMS
jwillia@samford.edu

Jim Williams is executive director for the nonprofit, nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama

Finding the Money to Build and Maintain Alabama's Roads

Few governmental responsibilities affect people more directly than providing the roadways on which we travel. Alabama has 3.8 million licensed drivers. We drive on more than 100,000 miles of streets and highways, which carried about 64 billion miles of travel in 2010.

Operating this network requires a substantial public investment. Alabama's state and local governments spent about \$2.2 billion, or \$460 per capita, on building and maintaining roads in 2011, about 7 percent below the national average.

Today serious funding issues threaten the capacity to sustain Alabama's road network. They stem from lack of growth in gas-tax revenues, increases in construction costs and budget maneuvers.

Highway money comes mainly from federal, state and local taxes on motor fuels. On a purchase of gasoline in Alabama, these taxes total about 39 cents per gallon.

The state's 18-cent tax rate was set in 1992. Since then, travel mileage on the roads has increased, but automobiles are becoming much more fuel-efficient. As a result, the number of gallons sold in Alabama, and therefore gas-tax revenues, are not growing.

Meanwhile the buying power of each tax dollar has been

eroded by substantial increases in construction costs over time.

In recent years, the Legislature has diverted up to \$60 million annually from revenues that normally go toward highways to cover funding shortfalls in the state's general fund.

At the federal level, an 18.4-cent gasoline tax has been in place since 1993. Congress has been authorizing more highway spending than these taxes produce, depleting the account and endangering future grants to the states. The answer thus far has been to move money from other sources into the highway account, but federal budget problems make this a short-term solution. Recent estimates are that the highway trust fund will run out of money in August.

One way to improve the balance between highway revenues and construction-related spending requirements is to create a sales tax for gasoline. For example, Georgia's state gas tax rate is 7.5 cents per gallon plus 4 percent of the sales price.

Borrowing is another way to bolster highway revenues. Alabama is in the midst of borrowing up to \$1 billion in anticipation of future federal highway grant money. Of course, these bonds will have to be repaid.

The state has not yet finished paying for similar bonds authorized in 2000. ❧

La Esperanza Mission completes building



Photo courtesy of Anthony Gardiner

An educational building was recently completed at La Esperanza Hispanic Mission, Louisville, in Barbour Baptist Association. The 1,200-square-foot building includes two classrooms, a fellowship hall, kitchen and two bathrooms. The church dedicated the building June 22. Anthony Gardiner has been pastor since September 2013.

HEART OF MISSIONS...

About 30 members from **First Baptist Church, Union Springs**, and other area churches will travel to Caruthersville, Mo., July 19–26 for the First, Union Springs, annual missions trip.

The Bullock-Centennial Baptist Association church has taken an annual missions trip since the early 1980s, said Cathy Dawson, chairwoman of the church's missions committee.

The missions team will work at Cottonwood Baptist Church, Caruthersville, Mo. That church is constructing a new church building next door to its existing property, and the First, Union Springs, missions team will assist in that work.

Dawson said the team will arrive toward the end of the construction phase and most likely will help Cottonwood Baptist with painting and other tasks such as moving furniture and tidying up the property's landscaping.

First, Union Springs, was connected to Cottonwood through the North American Mission Board's website, where churches searching for missions projects can search through a database of needs around the country.

To help cover the costs for its missions projects, First, Union Springs, holds fundraiser luncheons each month, Dawson said.

Pastor Bill Cannon said of the upcoming trip, "God is faithful to ... provide a place for us to go ... to serve Him and His Church." (Julie Payne)

Winston Baptist Association will take a missions work trip to Pleasant Hill, Ill., July 13–20.

About 50 people — all from churches in Winston Association — will participate, said Al Hood, director of missions for the association.

The team will do Sheetrock work for First Baptist Church, Pleasant Hill, Ill., at that church's newly relocated site.

Team members also will take part in door-to-door outreach. Hood explained that a member of First, Pleasant Hill, has a heart for a community near his church that doesn't have a Baptist church, and he desires to conduct some outreach to start a Bible study in that neighboring community. The Winston Association team will assist by participating in this outreach, Hood said.

The missions team will be split into three groups for the duration of the trip: a Sheetrock team, a food crew team responsible for cooking all the meals, and a ministry team, which will conduct the door-to-door outreach.

Hood, who will help lead the trip, noted the association has taken an annual missions trip for about 20 years and all ages participate. (Julie Payne)

The student ministry of **Hepzibah Baptist Church, McCalla**, in Pleasant Grove Baptist Association will join forces with Breakaway Ministries, Gadsden, July 6–10 as they participate in Breakaway's summer missions camp "EMERGENCY."

The 20 students and eight leaders attending will participate in painting, minor construction work and backyard Bible clubs, as well as the opportunity to work in assisted living homes, Breakaway's clothes closet and Dream Center.

Each day of missions work will conclude with a worship service and Bible study. Rick Sevenish is student ministry leader for Hepzibah Baptist. (Submitted by Hepzibah Baptist Church)



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Six High School Athletes Sign Scholarships with Judson:** At its recent on-campus Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR) event June 3, Judson College in Marion signed six high school senior standouts who will participate in intercollegiate athletics in the 2014–15 academic year.

Raylee Eubanks, of Faunsdale, and Hannah Windle, of Reform, signed to play softball; Michcayla Pouncey, of Daleville, and Katie Harter, of Bessemer, signed to play volleyball; and Shana DuPree, of New Market, and Audrey Luna, of Toney, signed to play soccer.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford's A Cappella Choir Places in Two International Competitions:** Samford University's A Cappella Choir placed in two choral competitions during a recent tour of Europe, which ran from May 20–June 2.

The choir tied for second in the

large mixed choirs category at the Florilège Vocal de Tours competition in Tours, France, and was one of four choirs in the overall finals. This was the second year for Samford to participate in this competition.

In addition, the choir received the Prix À Cœur Joie International prize, awarded to a non-French speaking choir for the "quality of its musical performance and pronunciation of a work written by any French composer after 1750." The choir's performance of "Yver, vous n'estes qu' un vilain" by Claude Debussy earned the prize.

Choir director Philip Copeland received the conductor's prize for excellence in choral conducting at the competition.

Earlier the choir participated in the annual Ave Verum competition in Baden, Austria. Samford won third prize in the first round and finished second in the finals. The choir also won a prize for "best interpretation of a piece written after 2000."

In addition to the competitions, the choir sang at St. Matthias Church, Budapest, Hungary, and participated in a master class led

by the director of the Vienna Boys Choir.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **New Student Registration July 11:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) will hold registration and orientation for new students July 11, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. There is still time for new and transfer students to apply for admission to UMobile and register for the fall semester. Current students are encouraged to complete registration for the fall semester July 11.

New students are asked to RSVP for the July 11 registration by going to www.umobile.edu and clicking "New Student Registration" or by calling 251-442-2222.

Current students may complete their fall registration by contacting their academic department and arranging a meeting in person or by calling their advisor or by calling 251-442-2222.

Prospective students are invited to visit campus during the summer. To a visit on campus, visit www.umobile.edu/visit. ❧



Photo courtesy of Jerry Hall

Jerry Hall, pastor of First Baptist Church, Livingston, cooks for Chinese exchange students who attend the University of West Alabama as a part of the church's outreach to students.

All about connections

FBC Livingston works with locals to reach Chinese students

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Pastor Jerry Hall was quick to admit that his church's initial outreach to Chinese exchange students studying at the nearby University of West Alabama was a complete bust. First Baptist Church, Livingston, had the best intentions, filling baskets of dorm essentials — along with Chinese/English Bibles — for the 45 students and leaving them outside their dorm rooms. But efforts weren't well received, Hall said.

"We found out later they didn't like the Bibles, and some even threw them away, so we felt a little bit rejected and dejected too," he said. "The first year we made very few connections."

Hall knew it was important for the students to feel comfortable so he began searching for Christian Chinese connections nearby. He found a Chinese Baptist church in Jackson, Miss., and took 12 students on a weekend retreat, where they were hosted by Chinese people in their homes, fed Chinese food and made to feel "at home."

It was through that church in Jackson that Hall met a Chinese seminary student, Born Zheng, who became instrumental in reaching out to the students, and by the second year the outreach began to pick up significantly.

Hall made friends with the owners of a local Chinese restaurant in Livingston and they began attending First, Livingston, regularly. Hall would go by the restaurant on Thursday evenings after the dinner rush and would help one of the co-owners, Judy, study the Bible and answer any questions she had. Later she'd pass along everything they had discussed to her husband and sister (the other restaurant owners).

Friday night Bible study

Eventually it made sense to make that restaurant a destination for Chinese student outreach, so Hall set up a weekly Bible study on Friday nights to take place there.

"Born preaches and we have music and worship and everything is in Chinese," Hall said. "We run anywhere from six to 10 at our Chinese Friday night Bible study, and they always stay late and ask

questions. They're not on a time schedule like most Americans would be."

In addition to the Friday night Bible studies, First, Livingston, helped establish a weekly English as a Second Language class, where attendance ranges from three to 15 each week.

As the students who participated in the Bible study from its start began to finish out their two-year terms at school, the ones who had accepted Christ started wondering what life as a Christian would be like for them back home in China.

Returning home

Cindy Larkin, a First, Livingston, member who's been a part of the Chinese student outreach, said, "The students that are going back were very curious about how to win their families to Christ and started asking us these questions during Sunday School."

According to Zheng, it will certainly be different — and often difficult — for those Christians who go back to China.

"They're going to face a lot of challenges, but I do believe God has touched them and my prayer is that God will continue guiding them," he said. "Just like me, they're the first converts in their family, and I do believe that people will see them changed and will be curious about ... this God they believe in."

Hall has worked to help connect some of those returning home with missionaries in China or help them schedule ongoing Skype conversations with Christians in the United States.

As the students leave Alabama, Hall said he is sad to see them go.

But Hall and First, Livingston, members aren't left without a new challenge, as this fall a group of 40 Saudi students will make their way to the University of West Alabama. The church hopes to reach out to them as well (as well as 20 new Chinese students).

"It's so exciting, and now we're going to have to figure out how to reach these Saudi students," Hall said.

According to Zheng, Hall is the perfect person to be at the helm of this type of outreach. "My motivation comes from Brother Jerry. He's a living witness for Christ," Zheng said. ☞

ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Cahaba Association, Judson launch new cowboy church

Jeans and boots are standard attire for the newly developed cowboy church held in the Judson College Equestrian Center the fourth Sunday of each month.

A collaboration between Cahaba Baptist Association and Judson College in Marion, the cowboy church services have become an important outreach ministry for the area.

"It has reached an element of the population in our community that would feel very uncomfortable entering a church building," said John Nicholson, pastor of Siloam Baptist Church in Cahaba Association.

Nicholson is one of the key innovators of the cowboy church, along with Jennifer Hogle, assistant professor of equine science and equestrian team director, and Janice Williams, adjunct faculty member in equine science, and her husband, Bill.

Seeing the need for an unconventional approach to reach this group, Nicholson viewed the creation of a cowboy church as "an opportunity as much as anything [else]."

The services every month are varied, with different speakers and musical styles weaving together to minister to a crowd that ranges from 40-80 people each meeting.

"The change of venue makes a huge difference [in how people respond to the Word]," Nicholson said.

Altogether the cowboy church is a very strong point of contact for ministry, he said. The strong support of the Cahaba Association churches has been a vital source of encouragement for Nicholson.

Whatever the future holds for the cowboy church, Nicholson is enjoying stepping out of the box to minister to a more casual crowd every month in a dusty arena at Judson College. (Maggie Walsh)

African-American church sees God move in community

A group of 54 volunteers with Sisters On Mission, Inc., based in Lawrenceville, Ga., worked together with Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden, in Pine Barren Baptist Association, June 12-15.

The volunteers, along with members of Christian Way Baptist, prayer walked, hosted a block party, painted and did other work on Christian Way's K-12 school, Family Christian Academy, and worked on some homes in the community.

The outreach saw a total of five decisions made for Christ, five commitments to Christ and shared the gospel and prayed with 112 people. This was a significant outreach to the area, according to Pastor Charles Autery, who noted that Christian Way is the only African-American church in the area.

"Slowly but surely God is making a change in our community," Autery said. (Neisha Fuson)

Choctaw churches raise funds for mosquito nets

To help Baptist Global Response purchase mosquito nets for those living in places worldwide where mosquito-borne diseases are prevalent, the Woman's Missionary Union of First Baptist Church, Butler, in Choctaw Baptist Association is collecting funds.

Franklin McLelland, director of missions for Choctaw Association, said Rock Springs Baptist Church, Butler, has become a financial partner with First, Butler, in the mosquito net project.

"These nets are so inexpensive and a good way to try to eliminate pain ... and death of some of those people if they can get those nets ... and not have to suffer all the effects of malaria and dengue [fever]," McLelland noted. Contributions may be sent to: Baptist Global Response, 402 BNA Drive, Suite 411, Nashville, TN 37217. (TAB)

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Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BESSEMER

► Singer and musician Brad White will perform at **Maytown Church** on July 6, 6 p.m. Formerly of the James Blackwood Quartet, White will feature an array of Christian music. John Killian is pastor. ► A resolution was passed unanimously by the congregation of **Pleasant Ridge Church, Hueytown**, honoring Birmingham Police Chief A.C. Roper's public stand against violence of all kinds. Among other items in the resolution, the church publicly declared its support for Roper's public profession of "his belief and faith in Almighty God, our Creator; and for his public call for prayer to reclaim the city of Birmingham for the kingdom of God." Don Hawkins is interim pastor. ► The Gospel Singing Outreach of **Southcrest Church**,

Bessemer, will host Joyful Hearts on July 11, 7 p.m. For information call the church office at 205-425-4991. Scott Bush is pastor.

SHELBY

► "God and Country," Wilsonville's annual patriotic celebration, will be held around the Main Street gazebo June 29. The community event is a collaborative effort that will include a fireworks show and more. For information call Steve Thomas, pastor of **Wilsonville Church**, at 205-669-6663.

TALLAPOOSA

► Reunion quartet from Valley will be in concert at **Bethel Church, Jacksons Gap**, on June 29, 5 p.m. Refreshments will follow in the fellowship hall. Carl Stokes is pastor.

Called & equipped

FBC Oxford sponsors local church looking to join SBC

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

First Baptist Church, Oxford, is one of the oldest churches in the Oxford/Anniston area. Throughout its more than 175-year history the church has helped plant several other Baptist churches in the region. So when First, Oxford's missions pastor heard about the need for a sponsor of an area church, his interest was immediately piqued.

Justin Holland first heard about the need during the Calhoun Baptist Association's annual meeting in late 2013.

The Life Center, an African-American congregation, had been around for nearly five years but was hoping to become a part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). In order to become an affiliated church, The Life Center needed an SBC church sponsor for one year. This is a requirement to ensure the churches requesting affiliation are aligned with SBC beliefs and doctrine. It also serves as a way to create partnership and leadership during the transition.

Holland said, "Our church is located right up against a community with a largely African-American population but our attempts to reach them have not been successful. We thought, 'This is our chance to be effective in this community we've been trying to reach.'"

After talking with Sid Nichols, director of missions (DOM) for Calhoun Association, and John Thomas, associate DOM, about what the sponsorship would entail, First, Oxford, members started to feel even more confident this partnership was something they were called — and equipped — to do. In May the congregation voted unanimously to sponsor The Life Center.

Eugene Leonard, pastor of The Life Center, believes the partnership was ordained by God and said he and the church members are "so excited to have First Baptist Oxford" as their sponsor church.

The Life Center, also called TLC, was originally

interested in becoming an SBC church because of the convention's emphasis on missions, Leonard said.

"The basis of our whole foundation is outreach and so we've always been focused on helping others," he said. "And that's what it means to be a Southern Baptist; it's a missions-driven denomination."

Leonard, Holland and Thomas said they are looking forward to the outreach that TLC and First, Oxford, will achieve together in their area and beyond.

Leonard said he thought First, Oxford's attempts to reach the African-American community in the area did not succeed because of "cultural walls that were up." But by partnering together the two churches can "help break that cultural wall and form a bridge," he said. "It's been fun."

Working together

The two churches have already started to work together in outreach. In mid-April, they held a "Gas Buy-Down" outreach where the churches covered the cost of 50 cents for each gallon of gas purchased by people in the community. TLC organized the event in order to share the gospel and promote the church's Easter services.

Holland said, "The response was awesome. We were able to serve over 1,000 people, and I think the gospel was officially shared with about half of them."

The churches also have plans to sponsor backyard Bible clubs in July as a way to reach the community.

The Life Center also will move into an unfinished 19,000-square-foot facility in Anniston and have prioritized the recreation center as a space to complete first to help create a community outreach center.

Leonard said he hopes the partnership with First, Oxford, can help inspire other churches to team up in similar ways.

"I think this sets the precedent that a black and white congregation can come together," Leonard said. "We hope this partnership starts a wildfire within Alabama and even across the U.S. to grow God's kingdom." ❧

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FBC Montgomery youth choir performs at SBC annual meeting



Photo by Doug Rogers

The One Voice youth choir of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, directed by Chip Colee, performs during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 10–11 in Baltimore, Md. The choir, made up of ninth through 12th graders, sang at the annual meeting as part of its June 6–15 choir tour. One Voice, with 128 people on tour, also performed at several churches in the New York City area and worked with Southern Baptist churches and ministries including Graffiti 2 Ministries, Bronx; New-City Church, Long Island City; Global Gates, New York City; Bowery Mission, Manhattan; and Teen Challenge Center, Brooklyn.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 29

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

WHEN PRIDE TURNS TO GREED Ezekiel 28:1-5, 11-13a, 14-19

Selfish pride is the topic of this week's lesson. Satan's fall was the result of equating himself with God (Isa. 14:12-14). The kingdom of Israel split, in part, because of King Rehoboam's unwillingness to heed godly counsel (1 Kings 12:1-8). Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar faced God's judgment as a result of his arrogance (Dan. 4:28-32). In the case of each person, self-importance led to a belief that he deserved more.

In this chapter, we see a portion of God's judgment upon the nations. Within the surrounding chapters, Ezekiel explains that each of these people groups faces God's wrath in order for them to know that He is God (Ezek. 25:7, 11, 17; 26:6; 28:22-23; 29:6, 9; 35:4, 9, 15; 36:23; 37:28; 38:23; 39:7). Pride may lead to greed, but God is able to conquer these debilitating sins. Truly God overcomes evil with good.

Portrait of Selfish Pride (1-5)

Like other men of great power, the ruler of Tyre was proud of his accomplishments. He attributed divinity to himself, declaring, "I am a god." In his own mind, this ruler was wiser than the young civil servant Daniel, who was already making a name for himself in Babylon through his faith and wisdom (see also Ezek. 14:14, 20). The ruler's economic prowess and trading skills made him a rich man and he took pride in his growing fortune.

James writes that every good and perfect gift comes from God (1:17). Our talents and abilities, however great or small, are entrusted to us by God. No matter what our vocation — whether doctor or lawyer, architect or engineer, teacher or administrator, accountant or banker, preacher or deacon, manager or laborer — our abilities are given to us to bring God glory. When we fail to do so in word and deed, we rob God of His glory and take it for ourselves.

Problem of Selfish Pride (11-13a, 14-15)

This passage offers interpretive challeng-

es. Is Ezekiel referring here to the king of Tyre, to Satan and his fall or a combination of the two? Does this tell us that the fall of Satan did not occur until after the creation of the Garden of Eden? Is the "king of Tyre" a reference to a territorial spirit over a portion of modern day Lebanon? Or is the prophet simply writing metaphorically here? These questions are worthy of further study.

Earlier in Israel's history, Solomon wrote: "Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Jesus explained that God honors the humble, but He humiliates the prideful ones (Matt. 23:12). In fact, He instructed His disciples to take humble positions in public gatherings (Luke 14:8-11). James and Peter both indicate that when we as believers humble ourselves, God will lift us up (James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6).

Pitfall of Selfish Pride (16-19)

Pride led to corruption. Corruption led to disobedience. Disobedience led to expulsion. Expulsion led to disgrace. Disgrace led to humiliation among peers — "I made a spectacle of you before kings" and "all those who know you among the nations are appalled." Humiliation led to social extinction — you "will never exist again."

Throughout biblical history, prideful leaders faced God's judgment for their arrogance, but He has lifted up the humble. Pharaoh ultimately lost his heir to the throne, his firstborn son, for his unwillingness to release the Israelite slaves (Ex. 12:29-30). Uzziah, king of Judah, became a leper because he entered the Holy Place to burn incense, an area reserved only for consecrated priests (2 Chron. 26:16-23). Though sentenced to death, Hezekiah wept before God and was granted an extended life of 15 more years (Isa. 38:1-5). In the New Testament, Herod Agrippa died after taking pride in the knowledge that some called him a god (Acts 12:22-23). By contrast, when Paul was called a god by the people of Malta, he took care to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 28:6). We must take great care to give glory to God.

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D. Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

GOD IS WISE Proverbs 2:1-6; 3:5-7

Information is one of the key words of today. We are overwhelmed with demands for information and we want it immediately. Yet information is one thing — knowledge, understanding and wisdom is another. Even to gain knowledge and understanding is not sufficient for our growth in spirituality. Knowledge can corrupt as well as edify. Knowledge is power — it can puff us up in pride. Knowledge can make us intolerant of other people and it can make us manipulative. Knowledge can be gained at the expense of virtue and at the cost of integrity. We can long for knowledge to make it in life — to have the best possible qualification, for its own sake. Such is the way of wisdom that characterizes the world. There is a higher good than information and knowledge, and the Scripture describes it as "wisdom."

God is the Source of Wisdom (2:1-6)

The way of true wisdom is the way of godliness, to look to our God who is wise in all His ways, willing and able to lead us in paths of righteousness. It is a wisdom that we learn in the Scriptures, by turning our minds and hearts over and over again to the Lord who alone can "teach us the way of His statutes" and "give us understanding so that we may keep His law and observe it with our whole hearts."

Verse 5 indicates the key to wisdom. It is to know God, to "fear the Lord" and thereby find "knowledge of God." This phrase doesn't mean to be "frightened of God" but rather to honor, revere and obey Him. Isaiah 11 reminds us the Messiah was a person who would know the presence of the "Spirit of the Lord upon Him ... the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (v. 2). The Book of Acts tells us the mark of a growing church is that they "lived in the fear of the Lord" (9:31). Those who fear God are the people who prosper spiritually and seek the companionship of fellow be-

lievers as they "talk with each other" and together discover the will of God for their lives.

Don't Trust in Your Own Wisdom (3:5-7)

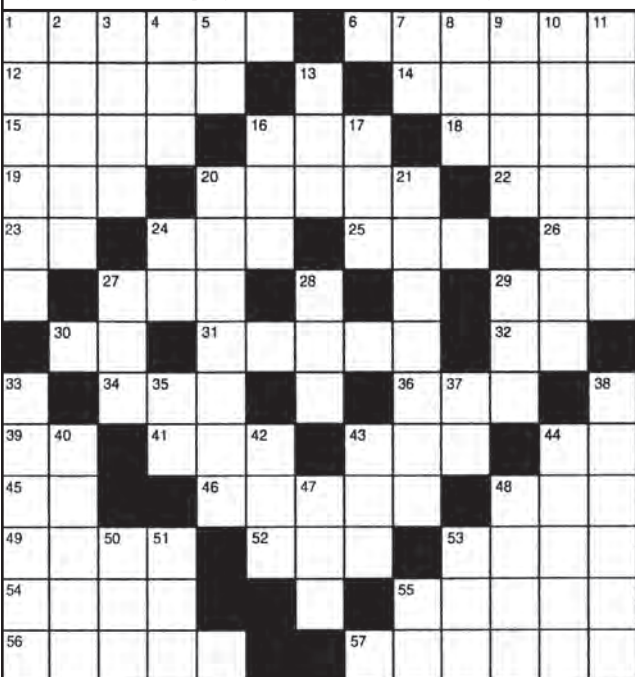
Living in this world it is all too easy to look to our own resources. After all, we have been striving to learn all our lives. We progress through school, college and enter into the workplace having learned all sorts of skills and knowledge. We come to the point where we feel we have made it. It is this attitude that strikes at the heart of faith and trust, depending on our own wisdom rather than the wisdom of God.

True wisdom begins with acknowledging God in our lives, putting Him first, seeking to honor Him by turning to His Word over and over again to lead and guide the way we live our lives. In all our attitudes and actions we are called to "acknowledge" Him and to put His ways before our own ways. When we do this then His promise is precise: He will "make straight our paths." He will direct us in the way in which we live our lives and make our choice pure and clean because we are living close to Him. Solomon is not talking about gaining wisdom for its own sake or for the purpose of using it for some ulterior end but so that we might live a life of godliness. We study the Word of God so that we may learn how we ought to live as the people of God.

The way of wisdom and knowledge is not to be judged in human terms by worldly success but by knowing the will of God and walking in ways that please Him.

Christian Crossword

By Martha Wall Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Compassionate. (James 5:11)
- Pleasant and mild.
- Musical saga.
- Mount. (Esther 6:8)
- Inquisitive.
- Behold.
- ___ weigh the path. (Isa. 26:7)
- Taken in adultery in the very ___. (John 8:4)
- Seat of affection. (Phil. 1:7)
- Eccentric joker.
- Left hand. (abbr.)
- Introducing new angle. (Matt. 5:22)
- Words of a talebearer ___ as wounds. (Prov. 26:22)
- His banner over ___ was love. (Song of Sol. 2:4)
- A memorial of ___. (Matt. 26:13)
- For each.
- Invitation to partake. (Isa. 55:1)

Down

- Levels of intonation.
- Period.
- Snug habitat. (Ps. 84:3)
- Root out of ___ ground. (Isa. 53:2)
- Each. (abbr.)
- Wordless question.
- East of Eden. (Gen 4:16)
- Describing metal or mettle.
- Takes for granted.
- Often a treasured communication.
- Satan's affirmative. (Gen. 3:1)
- Place.
- Historical time.
- Feeling pain.
- A great sadness.
- Exist.
- Gardening tool.
- Reward: death. (Rom. 6:23)
- To destroy them, and had cast ___. (Esther 9:24)
- God does not ___. (Isa. 49:15)

- Look.
- Associate in arts.
- Scratches.
- A measure to ___ even unto you. (2 Cor. 10:13)
- If any man ___ of this bread. (John 6:51)
- Beverage.
- Not fresh.
- A charged subatomic particle.
- Their feet run to ___. (Prov. 1:16)
- An article.
- Aaron's resting place. (Num. 20:25)
- An evil creature.
- Spanish. (abbr.)





‘RESCUE redemption & grace’

Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

While adjusting to his new role as a solo artist, David Crowder remains committed to finding innovative ways that will help connect college students to Christ. Crowder is the former leader of the David Crowder Band. He is now a part of the worship team at Passion City Church, Atlanta, Ga.

David Crowder continues to creatively communicate gospel through songs

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Even in the unique world of Christian music, it’s safe to say there’s no one quite like David Crowder. In fact, he has been called “the Pied Piper of Christian music” — drawing in young people to hear the gospel. After leading worship for events and performing concerts for more than a decade, his band caught many fans off guard when they announced their final season together.

As the Lord was providing opportunities and allowing Crowder to lessen his hectic touring schedule, he joined the worship team at Passion City Church, Atlanta, Ga., to have more time to focus on creatively communicating the gospel through songs.

While adjusting to his new role as a solo artist Crowder remains committed to finding innovative ways that will help connect college students to Christ.

Surprise ministry

Crowder said his desire to connect people to God and his passion for college ministry began while he was attending Baylor University in Waco, Texas. However, becoming a worship leader and recording artist came as a surprise to him.

“I still remember banging away on the piano when I was really young,” Crowder said. “When my mom signed me up for lessons, I kicked and screamed the whole time.

But in retrospect, I’m glad that I took those lessons. I picked up the guitar in college and couldn’t put it down. I’ve always loved music, and it felt like something that I would be doing for a long time, whether it paid the bills or not.”

As a student at Baylor he was troubled by a campus survey that showed 8,000 of Baylor’s 14,000 students said they never attended a church service while in college.

Armed with a vision and a desire to make an impact on their campus, Crowder and his friend, Chris Seay, founded University Baptist Church in 1996 — a contemporary church designed so students would feel safe exploring questions about their faith.

While serving as the church’s music and arts pastor, Crowder desired to write choruses to which students could relate. At the time he didn’t realize his songs, such as “You Alone” and “Our Love is Loud,” would be sung in churches across the nation.

“For me, songwriting happens when I’m not trying to write a song,” he explained. “I spend a lot of time reading and listening to music. If you pay attention to those small moments in life that maybe others aren’t noticing, then you have a place to write from whenever the inspirational moment hits you.”

With the release of his debut solo album, “Neon Stee-

ple,” Crowder hopes the songs will remind people about God’s power, protection and provision.

“My prayer is that these songs will help people respond to God, proclaim who He is and what He has done in their lives,” Crowder said. “The intent of the record is to let people know that there is rescue, redemption and grace available through a relationship with Jesus.

“This longing that we have for acceptance and belonging ... there is actually grace and redemption in the arms of a Savior who loves you unconditionally, regardless of where you have been or what you have done. There is no one who has run too far that can’t come home. That’s really the theme that keeps coming back over and over with these songs. It is during those challenging times when we realize our desperate need for a Savior, because Jesus is the only One who could rescue and sustain us.

“During the 12 years that I was touring with the Crowder Band, I can’t even begin to tell you how many people would share the most heart-wrenching stories you can imagine and then come to the climax of ‘I was going to kill myself, but I stopped myself because I heard one of your songs.’ Those stories reflect how God uses songs to draw people to Him. It inspires me to keep writing songs that will point people to Him.” 🙏



“There is no one who has run too far that can’t come home. ... It is during those challenging times when we realize our desperate need for a Savior, because Jesus is the only One who could rescue and sustain us.”

David Crowder
Christian singer/songwriter



IMB photo

Participants in IMB's jungle training are taught how to butcher their own food, such as caiman, a species of small alligator in the Amazon Basin.

'Our family's call'

Family of 5 follows Jesus to Amazon jungle

Brad Connelly watches thoughtfully as his daughter and sons splash around in the jungle river beside their small cabin.

Oblivious to the rest of the world, the kids laugh and scream as they take turns flying off a rope swing, plunging into the cool water and trying to swim against the current to a nearby rock. To them, the jungle is an exciting new adventure.

To Brad and his wife, Carissa, it's the risky place where they're about to move their family. Still, sitting on his cabin porch at the International Mission Board's (IMB) jungle training camp, Brad watches his children playing and knows it's the right move.

The month-long training program is the final step to prepare the Connelys and their three children — ages 4, 6 and 8 — to venture deep into the heart of the Amazon jungle and work among one of the nearly 230 unengaged, unreached indigenous people groups in the Americas. Their people group is less than 2 percent evangelical Christian.

The community they hope to work in is restricted and permission to enter is hard to obtain. For the moment, the Connelys live in a nearby city, praying that God will soon open doors for them to enter and begin work in the area.

Difficult environment

They'll be the only missionaries in their area, nearly 15 hours away from the next closest IMB personnel. Electricity will be a luxury for about an hour a day — sometimes. Food options will be limited, and Internet and phone access will be nonexistent.

They suspected a lot of this when they asked for this job — a job funded by Southern Baptists' Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and Cooperative Program.

"When we were looking through available [IMB] jobs," Brad recalled, "we specifically asked to look at the hardest ones, the ones no one else wanted."

But moving their kids to a difficult environment

wasn't a decision the Connelys made easily.

"I was thinking a lot about my family and how this will work out," Brad said. "One morning I was reading through the Bible about Abraham sacrificing Isaac. I was praying and I just felt like God asked me, 'Would you do that and not ask any questions?'"

As a mother, Carissa had to come to terms with the threats she knows her kids will face with this life.

"In the beginning I felt like I'm dragging them away from everything and putting them in a place where there's malaria and dengue and all these sicknesses and no doctors," Carissa said. "But the Lord had to teach me, do I trust Him? Because He loves my kids more than we could ever love them."

'Follow Me'

"It's not just Brad's call [to missions]," she continued. "It's not just my call. It's our family's call. Sometimes the call to follow Jesus is painted as something very nice and pretty, but there's a price. He says, 'Pick up your cross and follow Me, and you will suffer.' That's just part of it."

The Connelys know that not all their stateside friends and family members understand their decision to move to a potentially dangerous place. But knowing God has called her family has kept Carissa confident in her family's direction.

"Our kids are really blessed to grow up in the ministry and to know God as their Healer, as their friend and their everything," Carissa said.

The Connelys are committed to being Christ's heart, hands and voice among a people group who currently live with no eternal hope.

"God is in control, and to me, everything else is fluff," Brad said. "It's like God just says, 'There's the rope. Are you willing to jump and hold on?' And He's going to swing it hard all over the place ... but I just have to trust Him. ... And I feel like we're going (there) to see God do some amazing things."

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

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



Google's new policy restricts porn in ads, apps

WASHINGTON — Google is cracking down on sexually graphic content with two recent policy changes. The new rules take steps to eliminate explicit material in Google's advertisements and apps.

Google will no longer accept advertisements through Google AdWords that promote graphic depictions of sexual acts, according to an email the company sent to advertising accounts in early June. Morality in Media, a national organization opposing pornography, published the letter. The new policy will restrict ads containing or linking to explicit content.

The policy revision came after a May meeting in Washington between Google and anti-pornography advocates including Morality in Media, Concerned Women for America, the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family.

"We are grateful that they are realizing that their profits from porn are not worth the devastation to children and families," Morality in Media said in a statement.

Google's advertising approval process includes three status labels: approved; approved (non-family); and approved (adult). Non-family and adult ads do not appear if someone has the Google SafeSearch filter activated. Under Google's new policies, more ads will be given a non-family or adult label or be disapproved. Google said the change will affect all countries.

In March, Google beefed up its policies for apps sold through Google Play, prohibiting those containing or promoting sexually explicit or erotic content, icons, titles or descriptions. Since the announcement, Google has taken down several apps that violate the new policies.

Anti-pornography activists still encourage Google to eliminate graphic content from Google Search, Google Images and YouTube.

PCUSA votes to allow gay 'marriage' by 3-1 ratio

DETROIT — The Presbyterian Church (USA) voted June 19 to allow gay and lesbian weddings within the church, making it among the largest Christian denominations to take an embracing step toward same-sex "marriage."

By a 76-24 percent vote, the General Assembly of the 1.8 million-member PCUSA voted to allow pastors to perform gay "marriages" in states where they are legal. Delegates meeting in Detroit also approved new language about marriage in the church's Book of Order, altering references to "a man and woman" to "two persons."

This change will not become church law until a majority of the 172 regional presbyteries vote to ratify the new language. But given the lopsided 3-1 ratio of the vote, approval is expected.

The vote came after an emotional but polite debate in which opponents of the motion said it conflicted with Scripture and would cause Presbyterian churches abroad to break relations with the PCUSA.

The Presbyterian Lay Committee, which opposes gay "marriage," urged congregations to launch a financial boycott out of protest.

"The Presbyterian Lay Committee mourns these actions and calls on all Presbyterians to resist and protest them," the group said in a statement. "You should refuse to fund the General Assembly, your synod, your presbytery and even your local church if those bodies have not explicitly and publicly repudiated these unbiblical actions."

Under the new rules, pastors who do not want to preside over gay weddings are not obligated to, and the change applies only in the 19 states and the District of Columbia where same-sex civil "marriage" is legal.

Survey: Many do not want atheist in-laws

WASHINGTON — A new Pew Research survey chiefly focused on political polarization also found Americans divided when someone in the family picks a nonbeliever to marry.

Atheists are the most unwanted future relative, by far. Nearly half (49 percent) of Americans say they would be unhappy if a member of their immediate family picked an unbeliever for a spouse.

Marriages between Democrats and Republicans were not nearly as divisive.

The number of people who would be upset if a family member married someone of another political party was less than 1 in 10 overall. And the percentage was similarly low for marrying someone of another race or an immigrant born and raised in another country.