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Photo by Neisha Fuson

SUPER SUMMER

Spiritual leadership camp 'kind of like a mini-seminary for teenagers'

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

At Super Summer Alabama, leadership and discipleship are key themes taken to the next level.

This year's spiritual leadership camp took place at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, July 14-18. It was, for the seventh year in a row, "kind of like a mini-seminary for teenagers," according to Robert Mullins, who has served as Super Summer Alabama director since its start in 2008.

But the foundation for Super Summer Alabama really began in 1987 when Mullins, who spent 22 years in youth ministry before becoming a pastor, was a junior in high school and attended the first Super Summer Mississippi.

God used Super Summer in such a powerful way to impact Mullins' life that he felt the need to let other youth leaders know about the importance of this ministry once he was a youth minister himself.

By 2007, Mullins and three other youth ministers from across Alabama took their students to Super Summer Mississippi to see if it was something beneficial for Alabama youth.

Clear answer

Mullins said they all agreed they needed to start Super Summer in Alabama the next year.

"Super Summer exists to train and equip teenagers from Alabama to be Christian men and women and make a difference for generations to come," said Mullins, pastor of Mount Hebron Baptist Church, Elmore.

The camp accomplishes that goal by teaching in-depth courses on the Trinity, apologetics, biblical worldview, mentoring, hermeneutics and missions, to name a few.

Students who have graduated grades 8-12 can attend the camp but must be approved by their youth leader, be actively involved in their

church's ministries and active in a discipleship small group, memorize Scripture, have a personal testimony and be able to share it with others.

The requirements help provide "an atmosphere where likeminded students can grow in their relationship with the Lord with minimal distractions," according to Super Summer Alabama's website. For 2015, camp leadership plans to add classes for students who have completed seventh grade.

This year's camp hosted more than 300 students from more than 25 churches across the state; it was the largest gathering Super Summer Alabama has had yet, Mullins said. Divided into eight "schools" or age groups, students met 11 times throughout the week to study the

Bible and courses together. They also met in the morning and evening each day with messages from Scott Kindig, executive pastor of

Grace Fellowship Church, Snellville, Ga., and worship led by the Marc Lewis Band.

The camp also included time for morning devotionals, recreation and more.

Super Summer Alabama partners with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). This year Super Summer leadership worked specifically with Daniel Edmonds, director of the office of

Sunday School and discipleship, and Jamie Baldwin, an associate in the same office.

Baldwin said the SBOM partners with and promotes Super Summer (see 'Lasting,' page 13)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

A student takes notes during his Super Summer Alabama session on the Trinity.

COMMENT

Who Should Read the State Baptist Paper?

Alabama Baptist churches should promote the state Baptist paper for all active resident families. Some argue the state Baptist paper is not necessary for all active families. Here are 10 questions to help determine whether you or the active families of your church should read *The Alabama Baptist* each week.

1. Do you want to know about the persecuted Church? Each week *The Alabama Baptist* tells the story of Christian believers who are killed or persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Readers of *The Alabama Baptist* get timely information that allows them to prayerfully intercede for fellow believers who are suffering and dying because of their faith. For example, reports of the atrocities committed against Christians in Nigeria by Boko Haram were shared in the state Baptist paper years before secular media acknowledged the persecution.

2. Do you want to know the modern-day missions story? Telling the missions story is a regular feature of *The Alabama Baptist*. In addition to its own reporting, the paper partners with the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board to provide accounts of spreading the gospel through underserved areas of the United States as well as with unreached people groups around the world. In addition, stories about the hundreds of Alabama Baptist missions projects done across the nation and the world are a consistent feature of the state Baptist paper.

3. Do you want to know what Baptists believe? *The Alabama Baptist* teaches Baptist theology in a focused way through its Theology 101 feature. Each week readers are offered bite-size nuggets of theological insights about basic Baptist understandings. The result is a thorough overview of doctrinal truth compiled over a period of months and years. In addition, the paper teaches essential understandings of the Church and how Baptists work together through its ongoing articles and stories.

4. Do you want to understand moral and ethical issues from a biblical perspective? Drawing on a variety of Christian resources, hot-button issues like gay “marriage,” abortion, hunger, gambling, legalized drugs and many more are examined from a biblical perspective. Articles set forth biblical teachings and analyze how biblical principles can be applied to controversial issues.

5. Do you want to know what other churches



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

are doing? Each week *The Alabama Baptist* shares reports of successful programs and ministries done by churches across the state. Readers say these stories provide ideas and insights that can be applied in their own churches. In addition to learning new ideas, the stories give readers a chance to celebrate the success of sister churches.

6. Do you want aids for Bible study? Every issue of *The Alabama Baptist* contains two Bible study guides. These are among the most popular Bible study helps used by Alabama Baptists. Countless Sunday School teachers use them as they prepare to teach each week. But the lessons are available to every reader and offer insight into the focal passages of each week’s Sunday School lesson. In addition, periodic Bible study features are offered such as the January Bible Study emphasis and Bible studies related to moral and ethical issues.

7. Do you want practical help with life’s problems? Christians face real-life problems just like everyone else.

Consistently *The Alabama Baptist* provides practical guidance for issues such as protecting yourself and family members from pornography, grandparents raising grandchildren, dealing with depression and managing school anxiety. These problems are examined from different angles so readers can gain understanding of the issues as well as practical ways of dealing with them.

8. Do you want to know how what you do at church each week impacts the work of God around the world? Baptists are not isolated congregations. We cooperate with one another to minister in the name of Christ across Alabama, the nation and the world. Baptists work together in efforts like disaster relief. We minister together through programs that touch every age group from infants to the frail-aged. We unite through

our resources and efforts to share the gospel so everyone will have opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Christ. *The Alabama Baptist* shares information that demonstrates the benefits of Baptists working together.

9. Do you want a trusted source of news and information? *The Alabama Baptist* has served believers since 1843. It has been owned by the Alabama Baptist State Convention since 1919. Today it is governed by a board of directors elected by the convention that ensures the paper remains true to Baptist principles. The paper offers the best of Christian journalism. Two of the past three years it has been judged the best Christian newspaper in the nation. Evaluations regularly cite the fair and balanced way the paper reports major issues. Amid all the shrill voices bellowing for attention, *The Alabama Baptist* continues to provide a trusted and reliable voice.

10. Do you want a publication that will make a difference in your life? *The Alabama Baptist* is a lifelong resource for the lifelong journey of Christian discipleship. Regular reading will impact every area of the Christian life. Each week’s edition will be as fresh as the events of the day and as timeless as the Word of God on which the publication is based. The paper is not flashy but its value has been demonstrated through the 170-plus years it has served Alabama Baptists.

So back to the question. Who should read the state Baptist paper? Again the answer of the Alabama Baptist State Convention is every active Baptist family should read the state Baptist paper. That is why for almost 100 years the conven-

tion has urged churches to provide the paper for all active families through the church budget. When churches cannot provide the paper, the paper’s value makes individual subscriptions necessary.

The cost is negligible through the church budget — only 27 cents a week, which is less than the cost of a postage stamp. That is a small investment to make for a resource that provides so much value. Individual subscriptions are only slightly more.

As your church observes “Read *The Alabama Baptist* Day” on July 27, please pray for the ministry of the state Baptist paper and encourage every active family in your church to read the state Baptist paper because today, more than ever, Baptists need their state Baptist paper. 🙏





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

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Photo by Caroline Summers

Students participate in the drama and worship workshop portion of Animate, an intergenerational ecumenical workshop held July 1-3. Animate was sponsored by the Forum for Worship and the Arts at Samford University in Birmingham.

Worship arts

Samford's Animate workshop encourages artistic abilities in worship

More than 150 worship leaders and students from churches and Christian schools from eight states gathered at Samford University in Birmingham from July 1 to July 3 to study new artistic ways of leading worship.

Known as Animate, the intergenerational ecumenical workshop was one of three major initiatives of anima, the Forum for Worship and the Arts at Samford. Founded in January 2013, anima was made possible after a \$300,000 grant was awarded to Samford from the Christ Is Our Salvation (CIOS) Foundation of Waco, Texas.

As a pilot endeavor this year, Animate's enrollment was by invitation only, but next year Eric Mathis, assistant professor of music and worship at Samford and workshop leader, said he hopes to have an open invitation policy.

Animate's purpose was to encourage adults to support the regular use of young people in worship services, equip them to use the youth's artistic abilities in worship and to think together about worship and the arts in each local congregation, Mathis explained.

Intergenerational aspect

"The intergenerational aspect makes this program unique," Mathis said. "Our youngest participant was 11 years old and the oldest was 71."

The four-day workshop provided time for students to choose from six interest tracks that offered different approaches to leading worship: film, drama, music technology, choral music, visual arts and narrative.

At the same time adults attended their own workshop sessions that focused on youth ministry, relationships and nurturing environments.

"This was a test camp and the reception has been overwhelmingly positive," Mathis said. "It gives the young people a chance to pull from several worship traditions. In our opening service, we had everything from a brass quintet to a praise band to a poet to a visual arts presentation."

Mathis said the goal of the workshop was for the youth to walk away with greater focus and skills in worship leadership and for the adults to be able to take a lead in allowing youth to participate in the worship service itself.

"Often church leaders attend conferences that tell them 'do this and your church will thrive.' But the reality is that there is no cookie-cutter model for ministry. All worship practices ... in the Church are local. So we assumed from the beginning that each congregation was the expert about worship in their local context," Mathis said. "(At Animate) we did give them a framework for thinking about worship that is intergenerational ... and a framework for thinking about worship that involved the highest artistic integrity and theological imagination."

Churches are moving beyond the traditional format of music and preaching when it comes to worship services, Mathis said.

"(Art forms are broadening) to include principles and elements from visual arts, theatre, dance, graphic design and on the list goes. ... But we made clear at Animate from our theme: "Testing 1-2-3" and our key Scripture of 1 Thessalonians 5:21, "Test everything ... hang on to what is good," that

not everything is useful in worship.

"What congregations need today as they think about art forms (in worship) is wisdom and discernment. Not everything works, not everything enhances worship and not everything calls us to a deeper love for God and our neighbor.

"Churches should prayerfully consider what medium best communicates the message they are trying to send," Mathis said.

Keith Pate, minister of music for Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, attended Animate along with nine students and four adults from his church.

Pate said Eastern Hills Baptist already incorporates drama, sign language, art and other visual elements in its worship services but are now discussing "new ways to incorporate more visual arts ... using both adults and youth."

He also said Animate was "very inspiring and challenging" and that the team walked away with several creative ideas he hopes to utilize at his church including videography.

"We hope to experiment with [videography] and create some videos of our own," Pate said.

When asked what benefit there is to including art in worship, Pate said, "We've only just begun to scratch the surface of how we can use the worship arts to point people to the greatest Artist of all, our heavenly Father and Creator of all. ... And as we widen our approach through the arts it offers more people an opportunity to use their gifts in ministry and worship." (Samford, Neisha Fuson)

Planning for Animate 2015 has already begun. For more information about next year's workshop, email Eric Mathis at emathis@samford.edu.

Should I be concerned?

My 13-year-old daughter recently started wearing long-sleeved shirts, even in warm weather. I have heard about the practice of cutting, and I understand that many young people are trying it. Could my daughter be doing this? Does this mean she is suicidal? How can I talk to her about my concerns?



Dealing with self-injury

Cutting, burning, other practices of self-harm often hidden, misunderstood

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It is a ritual practiced in secret, hidden by long sleeves or bandages, brushed off as an accident if someone notices. Kids hear others talk about it at school and some give it a try. Sometimes accidents happen and worried parents wonder what drove their child to harm their bodies in such a way.

Self-injury, also known as self-harm or self-mutilation, is not a new behavior even in Christian life. In 1 Kings 18:28 the prophets of Baal slashed themselves with swords and spears. Mark 5:5 relates the story of a demon-possessed man who cut himself with stones. Religious history includes numerous accounts of the faithful who would whip themselves to suffer as Jesus did.

In modern culture, teens and tweens have become more aware of the practice of self-injury through movies, television shows, music and the Internet. Consequently the typical

onset of self-harming acts is at puberty, according to the website of Mental Health America, a national mental health advocacy group.

Just how many individuals practice self-harm is unknown because the behavior is usually hidden and often misunderstood. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) keeps track of self-harm injuries by age group as part of its national suicide statistics, though experts agree that self-injury practices are not suicide attempts.

Often not a suicide attempt

“Many people tend to minimize self-injurious behaviors due to their growing numbers,” according to information published online by S.A.F.E. Alternatives, a treatment program and resource for self-injurers and health-care providers. “While very few people actually die from self-injury, and it is most often not an attempt at suicide, the two behaviors are correlated.”

Though many cases go unreported and untreated, Mental Health America estimates that about 2 million people in the United States (roughly 1 percent of the population) injure themselves in some way.

Just as the statistics are hard to pin down, so too are the specific behaviors associated with self-injury. Though the most common forms of self-harm are cutting and burning, other kinds of injuries can be self-inflicted as well including hitting, bruising, hair-pulling, interfering with wound healing and drinking something harmful, such as bleach or detergent.

Regardless of the type of harm counselors reiterate that self-harm behaviors are rarely suicidal behaviors. Instead individuals are seeking a way to cope with the intense emotional distress they are feeling, said Anne Lawton, a licensed professional counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.

“Self-harm is certainly an unhealthy coping strategy, as many people who harm themselves report that physical pain is a way to numb the emotional pain in their life,” Lawton said.

Peer influence

Peer influence often plays a strong role in self-harm behaviors as Beth Davis, a parent in the Mobile area learned when her 13-year-old daughter, Sarah, became withdrawn and defiant. Sarah repeatedly found excuses not to go to school, but it was only after an incident that led to a hospitalization that Beth discovered the reasons for Sarah’s behavior. Beth learned that not only had Sarah been researching cutting and other ways to self-injure, but many of her friends had been cutting as well.

“It was something that bound them together, and it became contagious,” Beth said. “When their feelings were hurt or they were angry, their first thoughts became, ‘I’m going to hurt myself,’ and then they talked about it with the others.”

In Sarah’s case, the doctors ruled out depression and saw her actions as primarily influenced by her friends. Sarah is now in counseling, but Beth admitted it has been a difficult journey.

“This experience has changed our lives. I’m trying to get over it, but I’m angry, angry that she would do this to us,” Beth said.

Anger is a common reaction to the revelation of self-injurious behaviors, Lawton said.

However, in order to help with healing caregivers must look at the bigger picture.

“As a friend or family member of a self-mutilator, it is crucial to look past the action to the shame, hurt and pain causing it,” Lawton said. “Then as you and your teen utilize and understand the importance of healthy coping strategies, he or she will be less inclined to fall to the pressure of practicing self-harm.”

Resources

- ▶ **“Cutting: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Mutilation”** by Steven Levenkron
- ▶ **S.A.F.E. Alternatives®** (Self-Abuse Finally Ends) (www.selfinjury.com)
- ▶ **The Lysamena Project on Self-Injury** (www.self-injury.org)
- ▶ **Focus on the Family Parenting Resources: Parenting Challenges** (www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/parenting_challenges/cutting_and_selfinjury.aspx)
- ▶ **“When Your Child is Cutting: A Parent’s Guide to Helping Children Overcome Self-Injury”** by Sony Khemlani-Patel, Merry McVey-Noble and Fugen Neziroglu
- ▶ **“Inside a Cutter’s Mind: Understanding and Helping Those Who Self-Injure”** by Jerusha Clark and Earl R. Henslin
- ▶ **“Scars That Wound, Scars That Heal: A Journey Out of Self Injury”** by Jan Kern
- ▶ **“Hope and Healing for Kids Who Cut: Learning to Understand and Help Those Who Self-Injure”** by Marv Penner

Source: Lisa Keane and Carrie Brown McWhorter

EDITOR’S NOTE — The mom and daughter’s names have been changed. ❏

Seek help

Counselors provide healthy coping strategies

By Anne Lawton
Pathways Professional Counseling

The practice of self-injury is an important topic for parents of adolescents to understand and discuss with their teens. The practice goes by many names, most commonly self-injury, self-harm or self-mutilation. Two prominent types of self-injury include repeatedly cutting oneself or repeatedly burning one's skin. Many adults may have a hard time wrapping their minds around why individuals would intentionally inflict pain on themselves, but the truth is that these behaviors are much more complex than they first appear.

It is easy to conclude that self-harming behaviors are suicide attempts, but this is usually not the case. Normally the individual's intent is not to cause permanent damage nor is the intent to end one's life.

As I work with adolescents I often hear them say cutting or burning gives momentary relief from the world around them. Many people who self-injure report their emotional pain feels intense and unbearable. Thus the physical pain of self-injury is a way to numb the emotional pain. Essentially self-injury is a "quick fix" coping strategy to get them through the hurt in their lives. As they cut or burn, endorphins are released and the individual experiences an emotional and physical release that can be addictive.

Feeling of control

Many adolescents who practice such behaviors also say the act of self-injury gives them a feeling of control or ability to manage their situation. Remember how as a youngster you could not wait to unwrap the presents under the Christmas tree? Why was that? Most likely it was because you had spent the days before Christmas looking at the packages and wondering what was inside. The secret inside the wrapping consumed you and as a result the secret had power over you. This concept applies for someone who cuts or burns. The fact that he or she has a secret or thinks it is a secret gives the behavior more power and control than it deserves. Therefore it is important to seek professional help for anyone who continues to self-harm. When an individual is forced to address the issue of self-injury in therapy there is no more secrecy. This in turn removes some of the power that cutting or burning may have over the person.

Therapy also can address the root cause of the self-injurious behaviors. According to Eliana Gil in her book "Treating Abused Adolescents," self-injury is a

common symptom of prior abuse in teens. One of the most common feelings that precedes self-harm is shame. Shame may be linked to physical, sexual or emotional abuse earlier in life. Similarly any traumatic event could prompt someone to self-injure. Another striking statistic is that approximately 25 percent of patients with an eating disorder also display self-injurious behavior. Though not the only reason individuals start harming themselves, shame is a strong emotion and it can shape thoughts, feelings and behavior in a powerful way.

Take some time to talk to your children and teens about self-injury now. Reiterate with them that you are available to talk if they ever do cut or burn or if they know someone who is doing so. Strive to have a conversation with your teens that lets them know they will not get in trouble if they come to you.

Emphasize that your concern is for their emotional and physical wellbeing.

Left untreated, unmanaged stress may manifest itself as anxiety or depression and only get worse instead of better. In an effort to cope with these feelings teens will seek their own strategies, whether healthy or unhealthy. Certainly cutting falls into the category of unhealthy strategies, as does overeating, drinking or abusing drugs.

A professional counselor can help your child by teaching healthy coping strategies. Some healthy strategies include but are not limited to exercise, journaling, talking to a friend or enjoying a hobby. It is essential that adults in the home model these healthy behaviors.

As you and your teen utilize and understand the importance of healthy coping strategies, he or she will be less inclined to fall to the peer pressure of experimenting with self-harm. At times cutting may appear to be the "popular" thing to do when someone talks about it or wears wristbands frequently to school to hide scars. However, the consequences of self-harm can be serious and even deadly. It is always possible that a cut will be deeper than intended by the cutter or that a burn wound will become infected.

For all these reasons we strongly suggest seeking professional help if you identify unmanaged stress or self-injurious behaviors in your child. The consequences can be costly if we do not take care of ourselves by implementing healthy coping strategies on a daily basis. Pathways Professional Counseling is available throughout the state with counselors who would be happy to serve you, a family member or a friend. ❧



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"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Hebrews 4:16

God's promises

Scripture speaks about escaping pain, suffering

By Kathryn Steele
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

As we seek relief from emotional pain at varying points in life many of us use unhealthy coping methods such as food (too much or too little), exercise to the excess, a disproportionate focus on work or another person or abuse of alcohol or drugs. Another method of coping with pain, self-injury, has become a frequent method of coping in our culture today.

The Bible speaks directly in only four passages about using self-injury to cope with pain, but Scripture speaks volumes about seeking to escape pain or suffering. Learning to deal with pain is essential for self-wounders. They must develop a healthy response to pain and suffering. The Bible offers hope for those who inflict pain on themselves to escape from pain. Consider these truths from the Bible related to the reasons why a person might self-injure:

► God promises to be with us in all pain and suffering, and reminds us He is able to strengthen us to deal with our losses. In Leviticus 19:28, Jehovah commands the people of Israel to "not cut their bodies ritually" (some translations say "for the dead"). A common reason for individuals to self-injure is to cope with the pain they feel from a loss, often of a loved one. Deuteronomy 14:1-2 says: "You are the children of the Lord your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be His treasured possession." God wants to be our comfort and our Healer (Isa. 53:5).

Cry out to God

► God wants us to cry out to Him for help. In 1 Kings 18:28 the prophets of Baal tried to get the attention of their gods by "shout(ing) louder and slash(ing) themselves with swords and spears, as was the custom, until their blood flowed." We don't have to sacrifice our blood to have the help and attention of our God. Christ completed everything necessary to assure our protection and His help (Heb. 10:17, 18).

► It may seem no one cares, but God does. Mark 5:1-20 records the experience of a self-injurer who was isolated, living in the tombs and struggling with demons that tormented him. Jesus showed him compassion and sent the demons away from him. Hebrews 4:16

reminds us God is always available: "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

► Rejection by others is painful. Colossians 3:12 declares that God's children are chosen, holy and dearly loved no matter how others respond to them. Our true value and worth is found in Christ.

► Abandonment is a frequent emotional experience that motivates self-injury. God promises to never abandon us and He loves us even in our sin (Matt. 28:20; Rom. 5:8).

► Self-contempt may result from abuse or neglect. One who has experienced abuse or neglect may believe he or she is unworthy of love or happiness. Sometimes the act of believing one deserves abuse gives an explanation for why others have inflicted pain on him or her. God declares we are a treasure of infinite value. God purchased us for a huge price. Each person is worth more to God than he or she can comprehend, "precious and honored in (His

sight" (Isa. 43:4).

► Regular negative messages bring immense emotional pain. These messages come from parents, culture or graceless religion. Such messages constantly communicate that a person is not good enough and never will be. However, Psalm 139:14 declares that God made us wonderfully complex and we are a delight to Him.

► Physical pain can bring distraction from emotional pain. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us God is faithful and will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear.

► Some self-injurers cut or burn believing it will purify them. One cutter said, "I needed to see blood leave my body to know I was cutting out all the sin, the sadness, the anger, the hatred, the frustration." Jesus tells us He lived to sacrifice His blood for us once and for all. Our blood is insufficient, so Christ bled in our place.

Our body belongs to Christ, therefore we must honor God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). God's Word offers much hope for those who are using self-injury as a method of coping. Together with God's strength and help appropriate for the situation of each person, the patterns of self-harm can be changed.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Kathryn Steele is an associate professor of psychology and counseling and director of clinical training at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. ❧

God promises to never abandon us and He loves us even in our sin.

(Matt. 28:20; Rom. 5:8)

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BESSEMER

► **Maytown Church, Bessemer**, will host Squire Parsons in concert July 26, 6 p.m. John Killian is pastor. ► The Gospel Singing Outreach of **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host Crimson Stained and Crossing Grace on Aug. 1, 7 p.m. For information call the church office at 205-425-4991. Scott Bush is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Roger Willmore**, former president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, resigned as pastor of **Deerfoot Church, Trussville**, effective June 30. He served as senior pastor for nine and a half years. Willmore served in pastoral ministry for more than 40 years. He was active in denominational life having served the Alabama Baptist Convention. He also served as a LifeWay trustee for nine years. For 15 years he taught in the annual Beeson (Samford) Pastors School. Willmore's ministry has included active involvement in foreign missions. He says this aspect of his ministry has intensified his concern for the churches and pastors in the more difficult regions of the world.



WILLMORE

Willmore was mentored for 30 years by the late Stephen F. Olford of Olford Ministries International in Memphis, Tenn. The Keswick Christian Life Convention is an integral part of Willmore's ministry. Keswick is a convention for the deepening of the spiritual life. It began in Keswick, England, in 1875. Willmore has preached in Keswick Conventions in the U.S., India, Japan, Trinidad and Tobago, Bermuda and Haiti. In all he has ministered in more than 15 countries. Willmore is now available for Christian life conventions, one-day events or pulpit supply. He can be reached at 205-529-0442 or rdwillmore@yahoo.com.

COFFEE

► **Ben Amlong** will retire July 24 as pastor of **Roeton Church, Brundidge**, after 49 and a half years in the ministry. He is originally from Bradenton, Fla., and has served churches in Dale, Houston, Henry, Pike and Coffee counties. He previously served as pastor of Zion Chapel Church in Coffee County. He will be available for supply preaching. He may be contacted at 334-735-3831.

COOSA RIVER

► **First Church, Tallasahatchie, in Alpine** will celebrate homecoming July 27. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. and the service will be at 10:30 a.m. with Randy Hagen. The southern gospel group Crystal River from Oxford will perform. The church also will hold revival July 28-30,

6:30 p.m. Cody Hale will speak July 28-29 and Hagen will speak July 30. Jim McCain is pastor.

DEKALB

► **Kirk Griggs** has resigned from **First Church, Geraldine**. He is currently available for revival and pulpit supply. He may be contacted by email at Griggs53@yahoo.com or by phone at 256-609-5263.

GENEVA

► **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will hold revival Aug. 3, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Aug. 4-6, 7 p.m. Mark Rathel will speak and Barol Bailey will provide music. James Newell is interim pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Elkton Road Church, Athens**, will host a Christian Life Convention July 27-31 with Ted S. Rendall and Don Graham as the convention preachers. Services will be Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and weeknights at 6:30. Toney Wales is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Adam Dooley** has resigned as pastor of Dauphin Way Church, Mobile, to become pastor of First Church, Sunnyvale, in Mesquite, Texas.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Taylorville Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host Frank Jones in concert July 27, 6 p.m. For information call 205-758-0868. Curtis Kelley is pastor. ☪



Christians charged with murder after praying for sick villager

SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE, Laos — Eager to stop the spread of Christianity, authorities in a village in Laos have charged a pastor and four church members with murder after they prayed for a sick woman who later died, area sources said.

The deceased, a mother of eight grown children in Savannakhet Province identified only by her surname of Chan, had been ill for two years with an unknown condition. Various kinds of healers and doctors had treated her without success, area residents told a representative of Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRF).

An HRWLRF representative, who requested anonymity for security reasons, said, "(Chan) embraced the Christian faith. Then she suddenly passed away June 21. The police authorities charged Kaithong as well as the other four Christians/leaders who were present at the funeral of murder because she passed away." Her sons and daughters also began to embrace Christianity, he said, and other families in the village had already put their trust in Christ.

"I believe that authorities are trying to find every way they possibly can in order to stop the spread of Christian religious freedom in the area," the HRWLRF representative said.

Christians killed in attacks in coastal region of Kenya

HINDI, Kenya — Two Christians near Kenya's coast were killed July 7 following attacks by suspected Islamic extremists on two predominantly Christian villages that left more than 30 people dead, sources said.

During the July 7 attack, the assailants arrived at Covenant Church north of Hindi just after the close of a Bible study. Joseph Kangethe and Kenda Masha died when the attackers set fire to the building. A Catholic church building in the village of Gamba also was razed the same night.

On July 5, gunmen attacked both Gamba and the village of Hindi. In Hindi assailants with guns and knives killed at least 13 people, area sources said.

A note scrawled on a small blackboard from a school, found near a crossroads in Hindi, suggested the assaults came in retaliation for Kenya's military involvement in Somalia.

Ramadan-related hostilities have parishioners fearing worst

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Members of a Catholic church in Istanbul fear an attack after Muslims verbally assaulted and threatened them during a baptismal service and destroyed church property.

After two incidents at St. Stephanos Church parishioners said they are waiting to see if hostilities will escalate into violence during what remains of Ramadan, when religious persecution has been known to increase in Muslim-majority areas. Ramadan, an Islamic month of daytime fasting, ends in Turkey on July 28.

The two previous attacks have caused some members of an already small congregation to stop participating in services, at least temporarily. ☪

Sardis Association church originally built as schoolhouse



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

Pine Level Baptist Church, Opp, in Sardis Baptist Association may be small in size, but it will always be home for lifetime member Zadio Robbins. Built as a schoolhouse in 1874, Pine Level Baptist is where both of Robbins' parents attended school. Being at church is a tangible connection to the past for Robbins, she said. "[Pine Level] will always have a special place in my heart." Dewey Elmore is pastor.

Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to Date through June 30, 2014

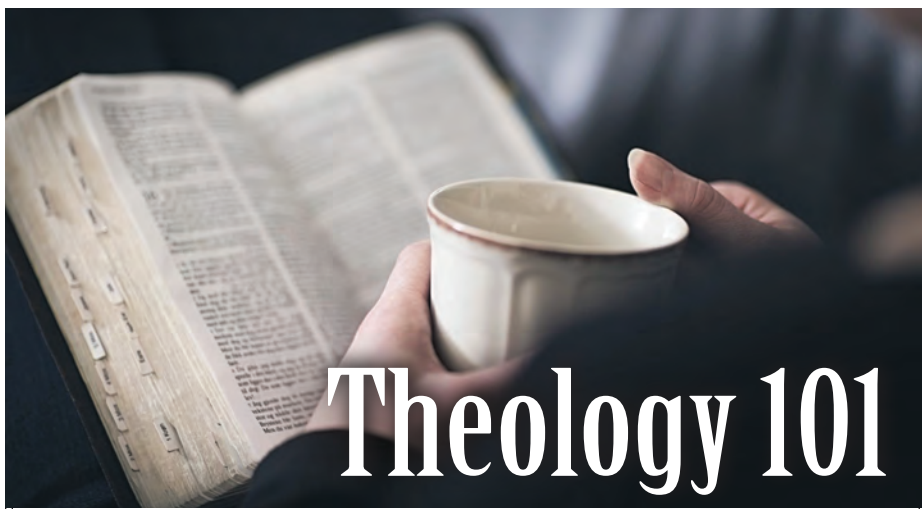
JUNE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,475,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$2,773,373
Under Goal for Month.....	\$701,627

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$20,850,000
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$20,281,551
Under Goal for Year.....	\$568,449

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



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Scripture Illumination for Understanding

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

The Spirit's involvement with the Bible did not end with His inspiration of its production. He has continued to be active in the work of illumination. While we reserve the term "inspiration" for the origin of Holy Scripture, we use that of "illumination" to describe the Spirit's work in believers who read, study and share the meaning of the Bible. As we handle the Bible the Holy Spirit stands ready to help us understand its meaning and to apply that meaning to our lives and our world. As we are blessed to illumine a dark room with the flip of a switch, so God's Spirit works to enlighten our minds so that we see the truth embedded in the Bible.

Illumination seldom comes when we are sitting idly by with the Bible parked on a bookshelf or end table. We must be actively engaging Scripture in order for the Spirit to do His good work of illumining our minds with understanding. At the minimum level this means we must read the Bible regularly or maybe listen to someone read it. Since Spirit-revealed truth has been compressed into the words of human language, we must engage those words in order for the illumination to occur.

Memorizing Scripture

Illumination frequently happens when we go beyond mere reading by spending quiet time meditating or reflecting upon the words of the Bible. For many Christians the discipline of meditation is crowded out by busy schedules and misaligned priorities. A further step that naturally follows careful meditation on the words of Scripture is the committing of portions of the Bible to memory. Over time, the more we reflect, the more we remember. Meditation helps truth take root in our hearts. Memorized Scripture offers the Holy Spirit the material by which to illumine meaning and understanding in us. Remembered Scripture is often the channel through which understanding flows, sometimes at an unexpected moment, often connecting one part of Scripture with another part so that

Scripture interprets Scripture. The commitment of the psalmist was, "I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways. I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your Word" (Ps. 119:15-16).

Often the Spirit's illumination comes through the work of studying seriously portions of the Bible. We frequently use study helps along with Scripture. When we do, we find the Holy Spirit illumines our understanding by way of the illumination He has given others who have been faithful to share their insights.

Importance of prayer

The fitting prelude to reading, meditation and study of the Bible is prayer. We can ask that the Holy Spirit grant us understanding. The apostle Paul so valued the illumining work of the Spirit that he asked for the same to happen to others, praying that they have "the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:18-19).

When we expose our minds to the Bible we also can ask the Holy Spirit who dwells in us to turn on His illumination for our enlightenment. Praying before reading is a spiritual discipline that we do not commonly employ with any other reading material, but with the Bible as a perfect treasure of divine instruction such requesting of help from the same Spirit who originally inspired its writing is essential. 🙏

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.



Changing lives

FBC Alexander City GAs help national WMU's Pure Water, Pure Love ministry through donation

Members of Girls in Action (GA) at First Baptist Church, Alexander City, visited national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) in Birmingham on July 11 to present a check for Pure Water, Pure Love (PWPL).

During the course of four years the girls surpassed their goal of raising \$2,000 for this ministry after learning about it through articles in *GA World* magazine.

Stephanie Forbus and Makenzie Davis, two GA members now going into sixth grade, helped spearhead the effort in a number of creative ways, such as decorating and placing water jugs around the church as collection points for church members to give.

Kristy Carr, who heads the Pure Water, Pure Love ministry, expressed gratitude and shared stories with the girls and their leaders of the ways this ministry is changing lives.

"You are a part of something very big," Carr said. "Because of your efforts, mis-

sionaries will continue to have clean water. Also as people around the world have access to clean water, and they hear that Christians helped them to get this water, they will have opportunities to hear about Jesus. Thank you so much for what you are doing."

While at WMU the girls had their annual recognition service and received new badges on their vests and sashes, including the PWPL badge.

"Some of the girls waited four years to get their Pure Water, Pure Love badge, so we were excited we could recognize them as part of our visit to national WMU," explained Wendy Holder, GA leader.

PWPL is a ministry of WMU that provides water filters for missionaries. In 2005 the ministry expanded to also grant dollars for well projects around the world. Since that time more than \$553,000 has

been granted for well and water projects and providing assistance with disaster relief. For more information, visit www.wmu.com/pwpl. (WMU)



Photo courtesy of national WMU

Wendy Holder (right), Girls in Action leader at FBC Alexander City, highlights the first badges added to Allie Reams' vest during their annual recognition service at national WMU.



Photo courtesy of national WMU

Members of Girls in Action at FBC Alexander City display new badges on their vests and sashes following their annual recognition service.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



2014 marks 525th anniversary of 'Book of Common Prayer' author Cranmer's birth

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), a leader of the English Reformation, was the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. He wrote and compiled the "Book of Common Prayer." Under Catholic Queen Mary I, he was convicted of heresy and burned at the stake.

This year marks the 525th anniversary of Cranmer's birth July 2, 1489, in the village of Aslockton in Nottinghamshire, England.

He was the second of three sons born to Thomas Cranmer Sr. and Agnes Hatfield Cranmer. Since his oldest brother inherited the family estate, he and his brother were trained to be clergymen.

At 14 years old, he was sent to Jesus College in Cambridge, where he received his bachelor of arts and master of arts degrees. He then became a fellow at the college. He married Joan, the daughter

of a local tavern-keeper. Although he was not yet a priest, he had to forfeit his fellowship. After Joan died during childbirth, Jesus College reinstated him. He received his doctor of divinity in 1526.

A respected clergyman, Cranmer gained the favor of Henry VIII, who appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. He was instrumental in helping Henry divorce Queen Catherine of Aragon.

Cranmer wanted Protestantism entrenched in England and gave his unswerving support to Henry, even when the king used tyranny and violence. Cranmer justified his support of Henry because he agreed with the doctrine of the divine right of kings. When Henry asked his help for several marriage proposals and divorces, Cranmer acquiesced.

Even while advocating Henry's marital

interests, Cranmer sponsored the Great Bible in 1539 and composed the English Litany in 1545.

After Henry died in 1547, his 9-year-old son was crowned Edward VI. Because he was too young to rule, a Council of Regency was established with Cranmer a member.

Cranmer's lasting legacy during Edward's reign was his writing and compiling the "Book of Common Prayer," a complete liturgy for the Anglican Church. The first edition, published in 1549, was followed by a revised version in 1552. The "Book of Common Prayer" is now used in Anglican churches in more than 50 countries and 150 languages. Other denominations also use parts of it.

Before Edward died in 1553, he had Cranmer agree that his cousin Lady Jane Grey would be his successor. She was queen

for nine days before Mary I declared herself queen. She soon had Lady Jane executed.

In November of that year, Cranmer was tried for heresy, found guilty and condemned to death. For more than two years he was imprisoned. Under pressure, he recanted his Protestant views. Under Canon Law, he should have been reprieved, but Mary wanted to make him an example.

Withdrew his recantation

However, on the day of his execution March 21, 1556, he withdrew his forced recantations and proclaimed his Protestant faith. As the flames burned around him, he placed his right hand in the fire, the one with which he had falsely signed his renouncement of his beliefs, and said, "This hath offended." His dying words were "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ... I see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." ☩



CRANMER

Restoration ministry

Ministers, churches encouraged to seek restoration when missteps occur

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

When Shea Lowery (see story, page 9) sought restoration from a moral misstep, the group committed to helping her contacted the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Dale Huff, director of the SBOM office of LeaderCare and church administration, guided the group in what to do.

The group became known as her restoration council, Huff said. And it played a role that other groups have played for various ministry leaders across the state.

"We offer to form a restoration council when a minister has been involved in moral misbehavior," he explained. "We provide the material to be used, and I come and train the council."

A typical restoration process takes several months with one year being the most common timeframe, Huff said.

In Lowery's case, the women on the

council would call her each week and ask her a series of questions such as:

Have you counseled with a man this week?

Have you had any contact with the man you stepped over the line with?

Did you attend your counseling session this week?

Did you attend a church service this week?

"The purpose of the council is to provide both accountability and support," Huff said. "Each council devises the restoration process for the person and situation involved, so no two are exactly the same."

But in all cases the overall concept is a four-step restoration process, he said. Those steps are:

1. Restoration to the Lord.
2. Restoration to the family.
3. Restoration to the church at large (not necessarily to the church where the minister was).
4. Restoration to the ministry.

**"Every person
regardless of their
sin can be restored."**

**Barry Cospers
DOM, Bessemer
Baptist Association**

"While there is no promise that the misbehaving minister will ever be in formal ministry again, we have seen some good things come about with those who have accepted their responsibility in immorality and desire to work to see things made right," he said.

Barry Cospers, director of missions for Bessemer Baptist Association, agreed.

Having been involved in restoration ministry for 15 years, Cospers even wrote his doctoral dissertation on how church discipline is really a ministry of restoration.

"A lot of times people treat church discipline as excommunication, but that should only occur if the offender rejects restoration," Cospers said. "Every person regardless of their sin can be restored. It is sad but sometimes the Church is the only marching army in the world who shoots its wounded."

Cospers has helped 18 of 19 people under church discipline for restoration be restored,

"and the 19th person is close," he added.

"I train in teams of three, men with men and ladies with ladies," Cospers said. The person who made the mistake gets to choose his or her restoration team based

on a list of individuals trained by Cospers.

"This is tough love and compassion without compromise," he said. "The team is willing to make an investment in your life so you have an opportunity to be restored and to know God is not through with you."

Cospers urges churches to be prepared for restoration ministry rather than find themselves

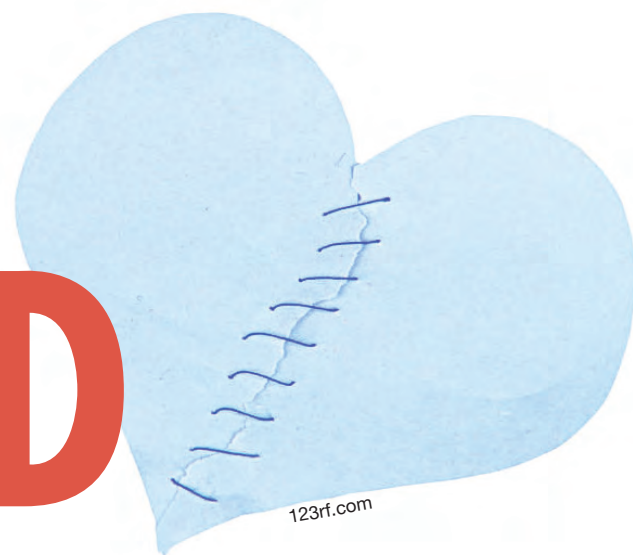
involved in it "out of necessity" like he did as a pastor.

"I have found churches who do not do the ministry of restoration/church discipline (when it is needed) will face a credibility issue in the community," Cospers said. "It must be remembered that church discipline is a labor of love and compassion for the Christian who has fallen." ☩

**To contact Dale Huff,
call 1-800-264-1225 or
email dhuff@alsbom.org.**

**To contact Barry
Cospers, call 205-428-
2451 or email barry@
bessemerbaptist.org.**

Lives Being RESTORED



New ministry launched to point unbelievers to Christ, help restore 'broken' believers

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Don't let the innocence of a birth fool you into thinking it will always be that way — in this case the birth was a friendship that started with pure intentions.

But Shea Lowery learned quickly how confiding in someone of the opposite sex while not heeding God's Word can change things forever. And it all started with emails and texts.

"I walked right up to the line and told God with all confidence, 'I've got this.' And then I stepped over the line."

Lowery, a longtime ministry leader and Christian speaker based out of Red Bay, didn't mean to be cocky in her spiritual walk. In fact this was not the first

time she had found herself in an inappropriate relationship, but she truly thought she had been delivered from the sin.

Then it happened again. And this time she couldn't see a way back. She truly didn't think God would forgive her.

But forgiving her was just the beginning. God restored her and set a platform before her that has her sharing her story

on the radio, at women's conferences, to groups of homeless women and in a soon-to-be-released book, "Redeemed, Rescued, Restored."

"I hurt a lot of people and disappointed a lot of people, but God took it and is using it for His glory," Lowery said.

And it all happened because a group of believers — the board of directors of her ministry at the time — chose to walk with her rather than cut her loose and distance themselves from her.

"I was leading a new ministry that was making a difference in the lives of women and children. I had put everything I had into that," she said, noting she finally felt settled in her walk with the Lord after years of ups and downs.

"I accepted Christ in my young 20s after my husband was killed. He was electrocuted on his job site," Lowery said.

"I had two small children at the time and tried to stay on track, but I was back and forth in my walk with God."

She became a member of First Baptist Church, Red Bay, and was there for several years before joining Golden Central Baptist Church, Golden, Miss., where her daughter, Mandy, remains a member. Lowery currently is a member of First Baptist Church, Dal-

las, Texas, while she works on a master's in biblical counseling at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

The years between Lowery becoming a Christian in the early 1990s and 2010 were tumultuous until "I got to the end of my rope," she said. "God flipped on His light switch and showed me the true condition of my heart. He began to change me."

Bethany Hope Center ministry resulted and life was good. Lowery was doing better than she ever had, promoting the ministry across the state and enjoying being an independent ministry leader and grandmother.

But she didn't listen to God's warnings about where that new friendship was headed.

"God had delivered me from such a past but I said, 'Lord, You won't forgive me this time,'" Lowery said. "I couldn't go to church. I was afraid of what people might think. I was repentant, but the weight of the sin was more than I thought I could bear."

She eventually confessed her actions to her ministry's board and wanted to quit the ministry. She knew she needed to be fired, but they wouldn't let her quit. After a time of prayer they said to her, "Your life has value. Your life has meaning. Your life is more important than this ministry."

"I was broken beyond what I had ever been in my life, but they decided to do life with me," Lowery said. "Discipline came and it needed to (see story, page 8). I had to step down from leading the ministry. The women on the board called me every week and asked me questions," she said. "The questions were for my growth in Christ and to hold me under high accountability. The men on the board would pray.

"They said they were supposed to help the person who had fallen, to help pick them up," she said, noting how their love for, support of and faith in her is what gave her the strength to move forward.

"The Bethany Hope Center was stripped from me. My ministry was stripped from me because of my sin ... but God taught me to be open and honest about our sin."

Lowery spent more than a year in counseling with a variety of individuals and also

confessed her actions to her family and the donors of the ministry. "Everybody was showing love," she said. "And all but one donor stayed with me. They said they appreciated me being honest.

"The board stood by me but never stood by what I did," she added. "I was not heeding the Lord's voice. We can read the Bible all day long, but if we are not doing what it

says, then we are not letting it work in us."

And now on the other side of the discipline and restoration, Lowery said the experience has been life-changing.

"I never knew God could do in a life what He did in mine. I never really knew how much He loves me," she said. "It was through discipline. I got taken to the woodshed and was there a very long time ... but God has now released me to share my story.

"If we all would just take off our masks and be open and honest with people, God

could take and use your testimony in a way you would never believe."

And for all the ministers, Sunday School teachers and other church leaders who are hurting because they have "messed up in a big way," Lowery wants to assure them that God can still use them.

"My testimony is a very difficult testimony to share, but I am seeing God work in amazing ways through it," she said.

Her new ministry Lives Being Restored "was birthed from a life that was restored from a time of great brokenness."

No one is beyond reach

The mission of Lives Being Restored is to share with all age groups the love of Jesus Christ, His gospel message and His desire to restore wounded and broken lives.

"No matter where you are or how far you have gone, God loves you and will restore your life in the most amazing way," Lowery said. "There is no one person or situation beyond the reach of God."

Lowery is available to speak on a variety of topics including her testimony.

For more information, visit www.livesbeingrestored.com, email livesbeingrestored@aol.com or call 256-460-8506. ☞

For more information about Shea Lowery's ministry, visit www.livesbeingrestored.com.



Photo by James R. Albritton/Salt Fork Images
Shea Lowery

Lessons learned

Keeping healthy boundaries

► I learned the importance of using caution when confiding in the opposite sex. Men need to seek godly counsel from godly men, and women need to seek godly counsel from godly women.

► Texting and emailing the opposite sex can be a dangerous thing.

Doing life with others

► I saw a picture of Christ in the way the board of directors of the ministry handled the entire situation. Never once did any of them put their reputations in front of helping me. They did not love the sin, but they sure did love

the sinner. They showed mercy, forgiveness and discipline in love.

Experiencing the Father

► I experienced God in a way I had never before in my life. God forgave me and gave me a new beginning. He picked me up out of a pit and restored my soul.

Extending forgiveness

► I hurt God and others, and I'm so deeply sorry for my actions. God still forgave me as did so many others. Forgiveness brings about healing.

—By Shea Lowery

CAMPUS

News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Receives Accreditation for Social Work Program:** Judson College in Marion has received accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) for its bachelor of social work (BSW) program.

The CSWE accreditation of Judson's BSW program means the program meets the highest professional standards, while preparing BSW graduates for competent social work practice with clients they will serve within the various agencies employing them.

Allen Stata, director of the social work department at Judson, said, "It is an exciting time for Judson's BSW program. With our accreditation, we expect to see considerable growth in applications for our program."

"Accreditation means not only recognition but also has practical benefits for our students. First our graduates are able to sit for the BSW examiners licensing exam. Second our graduates become eligible for advanced standing in-

a master's of social work (MSW) program. Advanced standing means that MSW students who have graduated from an accredited BSW program essentially skip the first year of an MSW program with substantial savings of time and money."

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Platinum Record Songwriter Jamie Harvill Returns to Teach at Alma Mater:** University of Mobile (UMobile) alumnus Jamie Harvill has returned to his alma mater as artist in residence in the School of Worship Leadership.

After graduating cum laude from UMobile in 1989, Harvill began writing songs for Integrity Music, which has resources and materials distributed to more than 160 countries. Harvill's partnership with Integrity Music resulted in some of his most well-known worship classics such as "Ancient of Days," "Because We Believe," "Firm Foundation" and "Garments of Praise."

Harvill's later projects in-

cluded recording songs in his personal studio and serving as a music director in a Nashville-area church.

As artist in residence he will teach a variety of subjects targeted toward developing worship leaders. He will instruct mostly upper level classes, including senior internships, applied lessons for guitar and biblical foundations of worship. He also will direct and oversee some of the student ensembles in the worship leadership department.

"Jamie's addition to the Center of Performing Arts is another shining example of the commitment that the University of Mobile has to providing their students with professional, successful instructors with real world experience," said Roger Breland, vice president for project development and executive director of the UMobile Center for Performing Arts.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford's Brock School of Business Students are**

Bloomberg Strong: This spring Samford University's Brock School of Business finance students once again excelled on the Bloomberg Aptitude Test (BAT). The global test is designed to aid employers in identifying and screening students who wish to pursue careers in investment management and financial services. The test encompasses current events in business, finance and economics as well as business skills and aptitude.

Samford students scored high on the BAT relative to other university students from around the world.

The Brock School of Business made the investment in this program to provide students the opportunity to learn to analyze and perform research with economic and financial market data in real-time, according to Howard Finch, dean of the Brock School of Business. In addition students can become certified in their Bloomberg proficiency skills while still enrolled in school.

Employers worldwide have access to the test results from Bloomberg when seeking to fill positions at their companies. 📊

Want to know GOD?

Pastor Sam Tate
Central Baptist Church, Talladega

Someone has said, "Life is like a coin, you can spend it any way you wish, but you can only spend it once." Choosing one thing over all the rest can be difficult. Life places before us hundreds of possibilities: some bad, some good and few the best. Jesus Himself stressed the "top priority" in life when He said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

The "things" Jesus refers to are the necessities of life: food, drink and clothing. God promises to meet all our physical needs if we will seek Him for our spiritual needs first. The Lord Jesus is clearly teaching that if we are to "know God," it begins with our making God's kingdom the top priority of our lives. By simple definition a kingdom must have a sovereign (the king) and a domain (the place where the king rules). Knowing God involves our inviting Jesus (our King) into our lives (His domain). For the present time God's kingdom is invisible and inaudible, yet it is eternal. In Romans 14:17 the Bible says, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy of the Holy Spirit." Jesus said in Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you."

The key then to having God's kingdom within us is to invite Jesus, God's Son and the King of this universe, into our lives as our Lord and Savior. The first step in this process is to admit to God that we have sinned. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Second we must be willing to turn from our sin. In Mark 1:14 Jesus tells us, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." Finally we must place our faith (trust) in Jesus as Lord and Master. This is done by praying. The Bible says in Romans 10:13: "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Will you choose to give your life to Jesus today, so that you too may "know God"? 📖

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

SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church, Cookeville, Tenn., seeks an experienced pastor to serve as our senior pastor. We are a multigenerational, Southern Baptist congregation. Average worship attendance of 650. See www.fbccookeville.org. Minimum education is a master's degree from an accredited Southern Baptist seminary. Please submit a cover letter and resumé to: First Baptist Church, Cookeville, 18 South Walnut Avenue, Cookeville, TN 38501. Email: Search-Committee@fbccookeville.org. Deadline is July 31 for submission.

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.

PASTOR: Evergreen Baptist Church, Billingsley, Ala., is a rural congregation seeking a part-time pastor. We are located in Autauga County at the tip of Chilton and Dallas counties. We have Sunday morning services and a Wednesday evening Bible study. Please send resumé to: Billy Caver, 2366 County Road 40 West, Billingsley, AL 36006, or contact by phone 334-361-0507 or email: ELSA4321@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Haven Baptist Church, Madison, Ala., is currently seeking a bivocational minister of music. The music minister must be a Christ follower willing to be a member of the Haven family. He is to lead our choir and congregation in traditional worship. In our music, we aim

to be multigenerational and seek to glorify God by singing Christ-centered songs. To inquire more, please email resumé to: havenbap@knology.net. www.havenbaptist.org.

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

MINISTER OF STUDENTS: Golden Acres Baptist Church is accepting resúmes for a full-time minister of students (grades 9-college). Resúmes may be sent to: 3405 South Railroad Street, Phenix City, AL 36867, ATTN: Gina Harper or emailed to: gabcgina@att.net.

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR/MINISTER: The First Baptist Church of Chickamauga, a vibrant, growing congregation in northwest Georgia (a Chattanooga suburb), is seeking a part-time (25-30 hours per week) children's ministry director/minister who will oversee all aspects of our children's ministry and preschool ministry with a total of 60+ children. All questions, resúmes and inquiries for a full job description should be directed to: thadkey@gmail.com.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR: Resumé to: Cottage Hill Baptist Church, 1120 Pleasant Grove Road, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127, or call 205-744-8521. cottagehillbaptist.org.

PART-TIME PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR: Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds, Ala., is seeking a part-time preschool director. This position currently requires 15-20 hours per week. Please email resumé to: joanne@cedargroveleeds.org or call 205-699-8446 for more information.

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South Africa's Msiza elected as new BWA president

Ngwedla Paul Msiza of South Africa has been elected president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). Msiza and 12 vice presidents were elected by the BWA general council, which convened during the annual gathering held in Izmir, Turkey, July 6–12.

Msiza will take office at the

conclusion of the 21st Baptist World Congress in Durban, South Africa, in July 2015, succeeding John Upton of the United States.

Actively involved

He is the second African elected to the BWA presidency. William Tolbert, of Liberia, was BWA president from 1965 to 1970.

Msiza has been actively involved in the BWA since 2000. He sits on several committees and is chair of the local arrangements committee for the upcoming Baptist World Congress. The congress is normally held every five years and is the largest international gathering for Baptists.

Msiza was trained at the Hebron

Teacher Training College and worked bivocationally as a pastor and schoolteacher from 1988 until he became founding principal of the Baptist Convention College in 1995. From there he became Baptist Convention of South Africa general secretary.

He has served as pastor of Peniel-Salem Baptist Church, Pre-

toria, South Africa, since 2011.

In other news, general secretary Neville Callam was re-elected by the BWA general council.

Callam, a Jamaican, became the first person who is neither North American nor European to lead BWA as general secretary when he was elected in 2007. His new term runs from 2015 to 2020. (BWA)



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

One Mission: The Great Commission One Program: The Cooperative Program Many Ministries: Great Commission Ministries

July 27, 2014

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We want to thank you, as a pastoral leader, for your support of giving through the Cooperative Program, which undergirds the ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Your church is a valuable member of the Alabama Baptist family of churches, and for that we are grateful.

As your leadership prepares the church budget for the coming year, we would like to encourage you to make sure that *The Alabama Baptist* is included in it for your resident family members. *The Alabama Baptist* continues to be an essential channel of communication for Alabama Baptists concerning the ministries supported through the Cooperative Program.

The theme selected by *The Alabama Baptist* this year is “*The Alabama Baptist, Your Trusted Voice.*” With this in mind, you will be able to stay apprised of information about missions in Alabama, in North America and around the world. The comprehensive coverage of the recent missions involvement by Alabama Baptists in various places represent a unique service on the part of *The Alabama Baptist*.

The Alabama Baptist is an inexpensive investment. It actually costs less than a postcard. The regular reading of *The Alabama Baptist* by your people will strengthen your church family. It will provide for them much needed information and inspiration, which will make them not only better Baptists but better church members as well. By using *The Alabama Baptist* back page, churches can add their own information to this valuable vehicle of communication.

If you already receive *The Alabama Baptist*, then we want to thank you for your support. To add to your subscription list or to begin participation, contact *The Alabama Baptist* toll free at 1-800-803-5201, by email at circulation@thealabamabaptist.org, or correspond with them at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. You now have two options for subscribing to the paper — either in print or online.

As longtime readers and supporters of *The Alabama Baptist*, we highly recommend it to you as a valuable resource of information and inspiration. Thank you for all you do for the cause of Christ and also for your support of Great Commission Ministries through the Cooperative Program. God bless you and yours.

Your fellow-laborers,

Rick Lance
Executive Director-Treasurer

John Killian
Convention President

Birmingham-area administrative pastor arrested

A staff member of Sharon Heights Baptist Church, Birmingham, was arrested June 5 after two individuals came forward claiming they were sexually abused as children.

Jay Strickland, 50 — a nurse anesthetist, paramedic and administrative pastor at Sharon Heights Baptist at the time — is charged with two counts of sexual abuse and one count of sodomy.

Police say an investigation was launched in April after a male victim came forward and reported he had been abused by Strickland when he was a child. During the investigation, detectives learned of a second victim, a female, who reported being abused as a child as well. Both alleged victims are now adults and live out of state.

Terry Trivette, senior pastor of Sharon Heights, said legal authorities were notified and Strickland was placed on an indefinite leave of absence from the church when the allegations surfaced. After his arrest, Trivette said, Strickland “was formally relieved of his duties and is no longer employed by [the church].”

Strickland posted \$70,000 bond and was released the day he was arrested. His preliminary hearing was set for July 17 but he was granted a postponement until Aug. 21. Strickland maintains he is innocent. (ABP)

Church financial secretary indicted

After a grand cover-up of more than 2,200 credit card transactions and unauthorized purchases totaling more than \$129,000, Deborah Mansell, former financial secretary for Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, was indicted in mid-July by the Colbert County grand jury.

Mansell, 63, will face charges that include first-degree theft of property and 20 counts of fraudulent use of a credit card. Mansell reportedly took money from different line items in the church budget in order to hide the transactions she was making July 2011 through April 2014. (TAB)

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Charitable giving improving in US but not for religious groups

Americans are slowly pulling themselves out of a charitable slump — except when it comes to religious groups. That takeaway from the new Giving USA report, perhaps the most-read annual study on philanthropy, shows a slight downturn for churches and other religious organizations against an improving charity landscape.

American individuals, groups, foundations and corporations gave \$335 billion in 2013 — a 3 percent increase from 2012 (adjusted for inflation). It's the fourth consecutive year in which giving rose after taking a beating during the recession that officially ended in 2009.

But religious groups saw donations drop 1.6 percent from 2012 to 2013. That contrasts to healthy jumps in education (7.4 percent), the arts and humanities (6.3 percent) and environmental and animal groups (6 percent), according to the study released June 17, which Giving USA produced with the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Behind the sad stats for religious groups, experts say, is Americans' declining interest in religious institutions.

"Giving to religion represents primarily giving to houses of worship," said Rick Dunham, CEO of

Dallas-based Dunham+Company, a fundraising consulting company that mostly works with Christian ministries.

"There has been a growing percentage of Americans with no religious affiliation as well as a decrease in both church attendance and membership," Dunham said.

Research results

According to a 2012 Pew Research Center study, about 1 in 5 Americans say they have no formal religious affiliation.

But Dunham, who serves on the editorial review board of Giving USA, also noted that many religiously oriented charities are often counted in other sectors such as education and human services. "This is a bit of a complex picture," he said, because giving to religion "is both declining ... as well as shifting from houses of worship to religiously affiliated charities that are counted in other sectors."

Still the religious sector continues to collect a greater proportion of total charitable giving — 31 percent — than any other, according to the report. The next largest share of the philanthropic pie went to education, with 16 percent of donors' dollars. (RNS)

Court upholds France's ban on face veils

Europe's top human rights court has rejected a petition by a young Muslim woman who claimed France's 2010 veil ban violated her rights to freedom of expression and religion and amounted to discrimination.

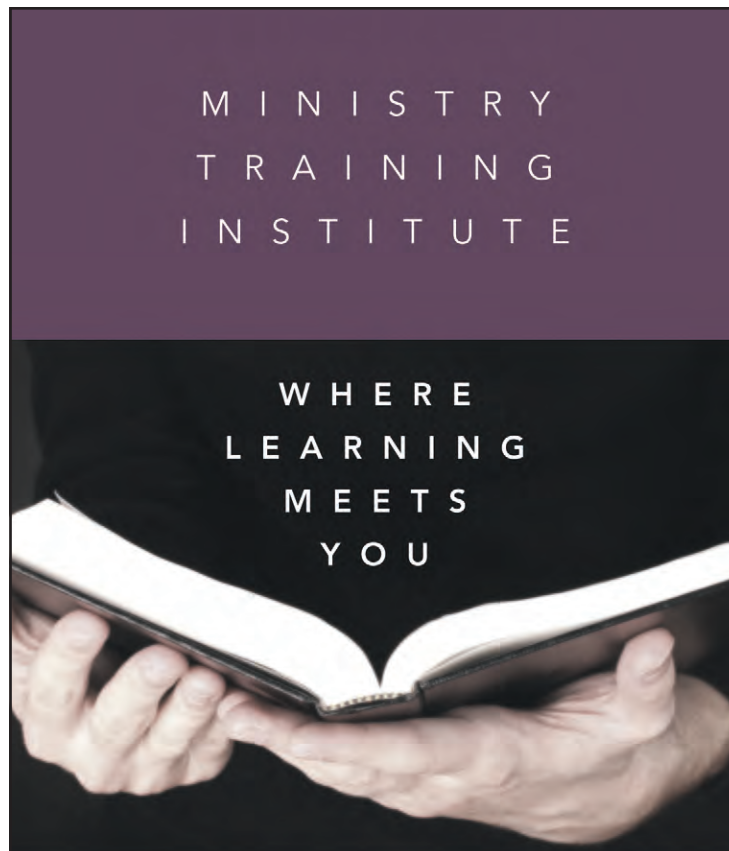
The French law bans most face-covering garments in public for security reasons. That includes the Islamic face-covering veil, or "niqab," which authorities argue violates France's secularist creed and women's rights.

While a minority of women wear the face veils — fewer than 2,000, the government estimates, out of France's roughly 2.5 million Muslim women — many Muslims feel the legislation unfairly singles them out.

Strong reactions

The ruling by the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights sparked swift reactions, with Amnesty International calling it "a profound retreat for the freedom of expression and religion."

Besides France, Belgium also has adopted the veil ban, as have parts of Switzerland, Spain and Italy. In France several court decisions have similarly affirmed the ban's legality. (RNS)



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Baptist university to pay for barring transgender student

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — A California judge ruled July 11 that a Baptist university was within its rights to expel a transgender student for violating the school's moral code but went too far in barring her from university-controlled businesses and services that are open to the public.

Superior Court Judge Gloria Connor Trask ordered California Baptist University in Riverside, Calif., to pay 27-year-old Domaine Javier \$4,000 in statutory damages plus attorney fees under the state's Unruh Civil Rights Act.

The law — enacted in 1959 and named for its founder, Jesse Unruh, a prominent state politician who died in 1987 — bars businesses from discriminating on the basis of "sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability or medical condition."

The California Supreme Court has extended protection beyond those classes to cover all arbitrary and intentional discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics "similar" to those named in the legislation.

Javier, identified in her lawsuit filed in February 2013 as a "male to female pre-operative transgender person," checked "female" on her application to California Baptist University when she enrolled for the fall 2011 semester. After she appeared on an MTV reality show saying she was biologically male, university officials suspended and then expelled her for fraud.

Javier claimed in her lawsuit she did not intend to deceive anyone, because she had always identified herself as female. She said in a statement released by her lawyer that she was "thrilled" by the ruling.

"It's such a huge victory for me personally and for other transgender people like me," Javier said.

Cooperative Program receipts near 3rd quarter goal

NASHVILLE — Contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program (CP) totaled 98.38 percent of the budgeted goal through the third quarter ending June 30, SBC Executive Committee (EC) President Frank S. Page announced.

The \$141,298,445.60 the EC received during the first nine months of the fiscal year, Oct. 1 to June 30, for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget is 1.62 percent short of the \$143,625,000 year-to-date budgeted amount.

The total is \$776,707.46 or 0.55 percent less than the \$142,075,153.06 received through June 2013 of last fiscal year.

Designated giving of \$173,373,521.37 for the same year-to-date period is 1.89 percent, or \$3,335,228.70, below the \$176,708,750.07 received in 2013. Designated giving only includes monies received and distributed by the EC and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

June's CP allocation receipts totaled \$15,379,938.50. Designated gifts received in May amounted to \$25,278,846.78.

The SBC allocation budget goal for 2013-14 is \$191,500,000, an increase of 1.86 percent over the \$188,000,000 budgeted goal for the previous year. ☞



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Walter G. Nunn

Former Alabama pastor, TAB book reviewer dies at 86

Walter G. Nunn, who served in ministry at several churches across the state, died July 13. He was 86.

Nunn earned an undergraduate degree from Mercer University in Macon, Ga., a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., a doctorate from Auburn University and was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1972 by Samford University in Birmingham.



NUNN

He served as pastor of Lakewood Baptist Church, Huntsville; First Baptist Church, Jasper; Gardendale First Baptist Church; University Baptist Church, Huntsville; First Baptist Church, Haleyville; Hokes Bluff Baptist Church and interim pastor for First Baptist Church, Athens.

Nunn served as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention from 1971 to 1972, as chairman of the board of the Alabama

Baptist Retirement Centers and as vice chairman of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. He also was a member of Samford's board of trustees.

Among other accolades, Nunn also wrote book reviews for *The Alabama Baptist* for almost 50 years.

Nunn was preceded in death by his wife, Margaret Elizabeth. He is survived by four children and three grandchildren. (Neisha Fuson)

Students who have graduated eighth grade meet in their 'red school' to learn basic biblical principles at Super Summer Alabama 2014 held at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

LASTING RESULTS

Super Summer Alabama trains, equips youth

(continued from page 1)

Alabama because of the "dearth of leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention."

"We're trying to stop (this shortage) by raising godly spiritual leaders and that's what Super Summer is all about," Baldwin said.

Mullins said in comparison to other summer camps, Super Summer Alabama "pushes harder."

"We raise the challenge because we want to see results that are lasting. ... Our expectations are that these students are ready for the next level in their faith," he said.

But Super Summer Alabama also serves as a networking tool, Mullins said.

Denis Tanner, student minister of Shades Crest Baptist Church, Hoover, said his youngest son will begin college in the fall and noted how making connections at Super Summer will be a "tremendous advantage" for him as he meets up with those Christian connections at college.

Tanner, who also serves as one of Super Summer Alabama's administrators and was among the group of four that helped bring the camp to Ala-

bama, encourages youth leaders to carve out time for Super Summer.

Shelby Cox, a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, has attended Super Summer for several years. "Once I graduate (high school) ... in two years

I plan on coming back as a team leader because no matter what age you are, Super Summer gives you some kind of life changing experience. It sure has made me grow as a Christian tremendously in the last three years," she said.

Every year Super Summer participants take up a missions offering for a selected ministry. This year they raised more than \$3,400 to give to Red Door Kitchen, a food ministry that serves more than 25,000 meals a year to those in need in the Talladega area.

At the end of Super Summer, students interested in committing to full-time ministry or missions met with camp leaders. They spent Q-and-A time together to work through the details of their interest.

"We want to go ahead and begin allowing kids to respond to that call in their life," Mullins said. "We have to have devoted pastors and other church leaders, ministers of the gospel (in the future). There's no better preparation than this," he said. ☪

For more information or to register for Super Summer Alabama 2015, visit supersummeralabama.org.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 27

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

DRAW THE LINE

Daniel 1:3-5, 8-10, 12-15, 17-19

Disasters come even for followers of Jesus. Attacks occur, church buildings are burned, young people are kidnapped and family lives are turned upside down. Nations are in turmoil in the midst of political, economic and military chaos. Just ask believers in Egypt, Sudan or Nigeria on any given day. People are placed in forced subjection with new homes, new dietary laws, new official language, new literature and new values.

When Nebuchadnezzar's emissaries took the young men of status from Jerusalem to Babylon, their world changed. Instead of rabbis as their teachers, they were instructed by magi.

They studied Babylonian mythology rather than the Torah, their names were changed to reflect the gods of Babylon (Nego, Aku, Bel) and their diet was initially altered from kosher to the king's menu. Hananiah, Meshael, Azariah and Daniel were among the young men whose faith would be tested by fire in a foreign land.

Evaluate Demands of Others (3-5)

Without a doubt temptations come. The apostle Paul tells us temptations are common to man. John explains three basic characteristics: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Through His own experience in the wilderness, Jesus teaches us how to overcome all three types of temptation (Matt. 4:1-10).

For the four Hebrew men, their temptation would be to sit, soak in and settle for a new set of personal protocols. They were chosen for their heritage and for the potential influence they would have over their countrymen as more and more people from Jerusalem and Judah were relocated. For three years they would be trained to serve in the royal court before they would be entrusted with that responsibility. Would they compromise their convictions in order to gain personal status?

Act Boldly (8-10)

Daniel acted decisively. When faced with dietary temptations, he determined he would not defile himself. What was the issue? Was it because a Gentile prepared it? Was the wine not acceptable? Was the king's meat from an animal sacrificed to one of the false gods of Babylon? The text does not reveal answers to these questions.

Early Christians wrestled with dietary issues as well. Can Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah eat "unclean" food? Peter struggled with this (see Acts 10 and Gal. 1). Must Gentile Christians follow the dietary laws of Leviticus 11? Paul's letter to the Galatians and the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 addressed this and other issues of Gentile practices. Can a Christian eat meat from an animal that has been sacrificed to false gods? Personal convictions and brotherly consideration both play a part in this decision (see Rom. 14:19-23; 1 Cor. 8).

Prepare for Testing (12-15)

In his boldness Daniel demonstrated wisdom. Rather than a wholesale boycott of the king's choice fare, the young Judahite requested permission to eat a vegetarian diet. When the royal steward feared the king's reprisals, Daniel convinced him to test the plan for 10 days. As it turned out, God granted the men from Jerusalem favor with the steward and favor with the king. This, however, would not be the only test of their faith.

Trust God (17-19)

Daniel and his countrymen honored God, and in turn, God granted them His favor. They devoted themselves to their studies, learning imperial Aramaic and becoming fluent in the literature of the kingdom. God also revealed truth to Daniel by means of visions and dreams. At the conclusion of their accelerated schooling, Nebuchadnezzar interviewed them and found them to be far more prepared for service in the court than anyone else. The four men trusted the Lord, and He entrusted them as His representatives to another people group. 📖

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

ENDURING FAITH

1 Peter 2:13-23

Winston Churchill, the great leader of Great Britain during World War II, returned during a period of great difficulty in the 1940s to give a commencement speech to his old school at Harrow near London, England. He stood before the young men who were gathered and finished his speech by challenging them "never give up, never, never, never give up."

In a similar way, Peter urges this community of Christians who were under a very real threat of persecution to press on, to persevere and manifest a life of enduring faith.

Enduring Faith Never Gives Up Doing Good (13-17)

Christians in the first century did not live in a democracy, where human rights were respected.

The emperor was a despot and yet the New Testament urges believers to accept the institution of government and to do the right thing. While they were never to obey the emperor if this would involve disobeying God, in most situations submitting to secular authority did not cause a conflict with Christian discipleship. It is not that earthly rulers have authority in themselves. They are only fellow creatures of God. However, in order to maintain order and not chaos, government is put in place and so it is for His sake that we submit to such authority. This limits submission, however, because it can never lead us into doing anything that causes us to sin.

Peter then expands his understanding of the honor that is due to human beings because everyone is created by God. All humanity has a dignity as those who have been created in the image of God. Emperors, slaves, people of status and the nobodies of everyday life are all worthy of respect and human dignity.

If we honor and fear God then we will respect one another and seek the welfare of others.

Enduring Faith Is Willing to Endure Hardship (18-20)

Peter is not indiscriminately suggesting that we accept injustice from our fellow human beings. His views on slavery were rooted in the culture of the first century. We would never consider that slavery of any form was warranted by God's Word in the 21st century. Nineteenth century slavery was wrong and it was wrong to justify it by turning to Scripture.

In a similar way, if injustice is seen in the way in which people are treated in the workplace or in school or even in church then Christians should be the first to speak out against it.

Peter is speaking here of suffering injustices because of our faith. Yet even Paul did not accept the injustice of being arrested and beaten as a Christian when his human rights as a Roman citizen were ignored. If we are Christian then we may encounter persecution, physical and psychological, but in suffering in this way we are following in the footsteps of our Master.

Enduring Faith Trusts God in Every Situation (21-23)

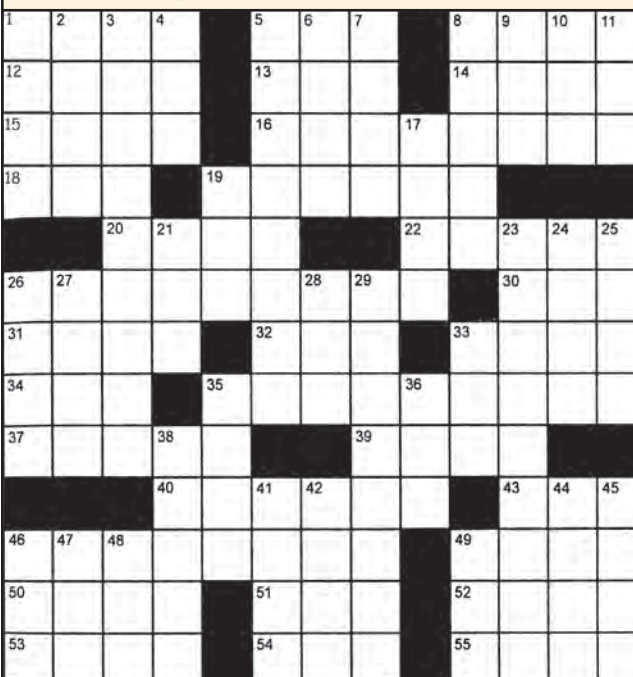
Enduring faith in the midst of trouble is marked by simple trust and hope in our Lord.

As He placed His faith and confidence in His Father, so we commit our ways to Him and ask for grace to bear what we cannot change. He bore our sins so that we might live for righteousness. An ethical lifestyle that reflects the life of Jesus is a life of real freedom that no human institution can destroy and that stands out in the midst of the darkness of sin and evil as honorable and good.

The feeling of being overwhelmed by the demands of discipleship, especially when it brings misunderstanding and even slander from others, is part and parcel of being faithful to one's vocation in life, the vocation of being a Christian whatever the cost. 📖

Christian Crossword

By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Mount ____; Moses died here. (Deut. 34:1)
- He hath spread a ____ for my feet. (Lam. 1:13)
- Mine entrance.
- Above the top.
- Boat paddle.
- He ____ witness unto the truth. (John 5:33)
- Gentle.
- First one.
- Samuel's mentor. (1 Sam. 3:1)
- Still on the market.
- We have seen His star in the _____. (Matt. 2:2)
- Ancient Greek storyteller.
- Returned to.
- Time period.
- Affirm.
- Optimum. (for short)
- There shall come a ____ out of Jacob. (Num. 24:17)
- Company top dog. (abbr.)
- Arguable.
- ____ Oakley.

Down

- Why beholdest thou the ____ that is in thy brother's eye? (Matt. 7:3)
- ____ yourselves therefore to God. (James 4:7)
- When thou wast under the tree, I saw thee. (John 1:48)
- From the beginning of the ____ God made them male and female. (Mark 10:6)
- I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a _____. (John 1:32)
- Gasoline.
- Digit.
- To stuff.
- Jail unit.
- For Christ is the ____ of the law. (Rom. 10:4)
- Part of the eye.
- saved. (Acts 16:31)
- Fort ____; California Army base.
- Midday.
- He that hath ____ to hear, let him hear. (Matt. 11:15)
- Threesome.
- ____ in Me, and I in you. (John 15:4)
- One of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Private old age fund. (abbr.)
- Far. (prefix)
- I will be ____ in the Lord. (Ps. 104:34)
- Navy sailing vessel initials.
- Atmosphere.
- I have ____ thee an open door. (Rev. 3:8)
- Spoken.
- Peel.
- A term of contempt. (Matt. 5:22)
- Level.
- Bill or check.
- Tested.
- I ____ daily with you teaching in the temple.



Christian singer/songwriter Karyn Williams recently released her Inpop Records debut album, 'Only You.' While writing songs for the album, Williams' father was diagnosed with incurable cancer. In writing her songs, she pulled from something her father told her after his diagnosis: 'Nothing happens to us that isn't Father-filtered. I know God will use this.'



Photo courtesy of Inpop Records

'Unshakeable truths'

Christian singer Karyn Williams sees her faith become 'real' through trials

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As Karyn Williams performs concerts she hopes to inspire people to step out of their comfort zones and walk in obedience to God's calling on their lives.

While growing up, Williams realized the great need and tremendous impact of connecting orphan children to their forever families — as her parents adopted 14 children from around the world.

She wrote the song "Just May Be" to remind people about the importance of reaching out and making a difference in the life of a child.

Willing to say yes

"My parents didn't sit down and plan to adopt that many children," Williams said. "They just saw a need, felt the call and were willing to say yes. We each have the opportunity to be the answer to a prayer, the one to meet a need. I think we get overwhelmed sometimes with the negative statistics surrounding an issue like adoption. So often we turn our heads thinking that we can't change the world because we can't help every single person who needs help.

"As Christians, we have the opportunity to make a dif-

ference in someone's life each day. You have a ministry right where you are, and you can do something today that will impact one person's life forever."

During concerts Williams desires to encourage families with biblical truths.

"For me, high school was the time when my relationship with the Lord became real," Williams said. "My faith has sustained me throughout my entire life, and my relationship with Christ has grown even deeper over the last couple of years. I'm thrilled to be able to share about Christ through music.

"In the summer of 2007 I packed up my car and felt like the Lord was saying, 'Go, I've got something really special for you in Nashville.' I was terrified and excited all at the same time. I promised the Lord that I would be willing to walk through any door that He opened, even if it meant stepping out of my comfort zone. I knew that it would be a step of

faith, but I needed to trust Him. He has been faithful to lead and open doors throughout this journey."

The songs on her album, "Only You," emphasize that Christ is the source of true fulfillment and freedom.

"The title track of the record was written in the middle of the night," Williams said. "I was wrestling with things in life that were just hitting me left and right. I felt like

the Lord was reminding me: 'At the end of your life, none of these things will matter. There's only one thing that matters — whether you knew Me, loved Me, served Me and told everyone you could about Me.' I just kept hearing over and over again that night, 'Only You, Only You.' That's all that will matter at the end of our lives. For that to be the title track of my first record is really special. It's my heart put to a melody. It's what I want my life to stand for."

'Opportunity to shine His light'

In the midst of writing songs for this album Williams' father was diagnosed with cancer. During this time she was reminded about the importance of sharing messages filled with unshakeable truths.

"I remember when my dad was diagnosed with a rare and incurable form of cancer," Williams noted. "The phone call that I received from him was devastating, and as humans we immediately begin asking, 'Why is this happening? Are we being punished for something?' It's been a journey of understanding that this did not come as a surprise to the Lord. He is not punishing us. But it is an opportunity to shine His light in different places. My dad said, 'Nothing happens to us that isn't Father-filtered. I know that God will use this.' It was amazing to me that in the very next breath, my dad was reminding me of God's power. My dad reminded me that this is when your faith really becomes real; you either cling to it or run from it."

Through her music and message, Williams desires to help people establish a solid foundation through a relationship with Christ.

"Whether people are listening to this album or at a concert, I really want them to take away a message of hope and freedom in the Lord," Williams said.

"It's an honor for me to be able to create music that is kind of like a big hug for people. We all have pain that we carry around with us every day. As an artist one of my favorite things to do is getting out and talking with people. I want to be real with people. I feel very honored that I get to do that and have the opportunity to spread a little hope and a smile into their lives." ❧



"I felt like the Lord was reminding me: ... 'There's only one thing that matters — whether you knew Me, loved Me, served Me and told everyone you could about Me.'"

Karyn Williams, Christian singer/songwriter

Let **GOD** take **control**

Montgomery Biscuits pitcher Bellatti shares about receiving a second chance

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Andrew Bellatti thought his life was over. It had hardly just begun. “A couple of years ago, I went through something that, if I didn’t have faith, if I didn’t let the Lord take over, I wouldn’t be here today,” said Bellatti, a pitcher for the Montgomery Biscuits. “I wouldn’t be the man standing in front of you. I had to have faith in what God was doing in my life.”

The tragic event involved multiple families. “It was awful; a terrible thing that happened. It could have happened to anyone,” he said.

When Bellatti was 18 he was driving his Ford Mustang near San Diego, Calif., and had a head-on collision. The crash killed the driver of a Dodge Caravan, a 50-year-old man. Charged with reckless driving and manslaughter, Bellatti was sentenced to eight months in the San Diego County jail and placed on probation for five years.

After serving three months, Bellatti was released. Playing a role was the widow of the man who died. After receiving a letter from Bellatti profusely apologizing, she said that was enough and asked a judge to allow him to go free.

“She showed grace and forgiveness. I don’t know of too many people in their lives who have to go through that. At that ... moment, I thought my life was over. For her to show that there is more to that situation and that she wanted to show me mercy, that was very meaningful,” said Bellatti, 22. “I was given a gift of a second chance.”

The accident forced him to grow up quickly.

“I was pretty much on my own in a place that not many I have been around go. Through Christ, I saw a bright light at the end of the tunnel. I really believed what He was doing for me was something that was predetermined; that He would help me through everything,” said Bellatti, of La Mesa, Calif.

During his time in jail, he read his Bible. “I learned quite a bit in those three months. I tried to better myself and come out a better man.”

Supportive family

Through his family, he found peace.

“They were constantly there through the whole situation, right by my side,” he said.

The Tampa Bay Rays, who drafted Bellatti out of Steele Canyon High School in 2009, also stood by him.

“Since they heard about it they have had my back. It wasn’t like they heard about it and were worried about the media scrutiny,” he said.

Bellatti continues to grieve. “Still to this day it is something that I mourn. At the beginning it was tough. I just let God take control because I (was helpless). It was all Him and His plan. In that moment and in that time in my life, that is when I really turned to the Lord for everything.

“The healing process takes a while. To be honest, I haven’t fully healed from it and I don’t think I ever will,” he said.

Montgomery teammate Richie Shaffer, a third baseman, admires Bellatti’s faith and resilience.

“Anyone who goes through adversity of that nature and comes out a better person is someone with good character and high ethics. I know that faith is something that is im-



Andrew Bellatti

Photo by Sarah Stephan

portant to him. I know when he was going through tough times that it was something he turned to a lot. That is something that continues to guide him as well,” said Shaffer, who is a Christian.

Faith is a “large factor in my life and definitely a guiding force. It is something that helps me continue down the right path for sure,” said Shaffer, who played at Clemson and was the Rays’ first round draft selection in 2012.

Montgomery pitcher Matt Ramsey, also a Christian, said of Bellatti, “He has been through a lot and handles himself well.”

Bellatti said, “God has been right there with me throughout my entire life. He is the ultimate everything. I try to live every day through the Lord.”

Bellatti was led to the Lord through his grandparents, Ronald and Arlene Bellatti, of San Diego. They would take him to church when he was younger. He and his parents, Ronald and Pamela Bellatti, would spend Sundays with them.

Influential grandfather

“That was a really special time,” said Andrew Bellatti, who is a member of Journey Community Church, La Mesa, Calif. He and his grandfather have read the Bible through together. “He gives me something to read, maybe something that he finds that day. He and I are very close.”

When Bellatti was 13 he broke his growth plate in his right arm, which is his pitching arm. He overcame that to be team MVP at Steele Canyon. He also was first team all-league.

Recruited by California State University at Fullerton, Bellatti bypassed a college scholarship for the pros.

“I knew when I was 5 years old that I wanted to be a

professional baseball player. I remember the day perfectly. I was on the computer as the rounds were going by. I see my name pop up. It was surreal,” he said.

Tampa Bay selected him in the 12th round (379 overall). He was a starter for three years and moved to the bullpen in 2012. He went 7–3 with a 2.97 ERA. He had 99 strikeouts in 91 innings and five saves for Class low-A Bowling Green, Ohio.

At Charlotte, in the high-A Florida State League, he finished 6–3 with two saves and a 2.95 ERA in 22 appearances. He had a 3:1 strikeout-to-walk ratio. This season Bellatti had a 1–4 record at mid-season. He had a 2.95 ERA with four saves. He had 46 strikeouts in 40 innings.

‘Dedicated and determined’

Shaffer said, “Bellatti is a great competitor. He works extremely hard.”

Ramsey called Bellatti a “strike-thrower” who “works down in the zone.”

Bellatti’s goal is to try to outwork everyone, he said. “The strength of my game is my aggressiveness on the mound. I think that is what sets me apart. No matter what I am doing, no matter what pitch I am throwing, I am just aggressive toward the catcher and not scared.

“Last year (when) I came up here (Montgomery), I was pitching timid and got hit and walked a bunch of guys. That wasn’t me at all and I think everyone knew it. This year, I have been really aggressive going after guys. I am not scared of anyone.”

His favorite pitch, a fastball, has topped 95 mph. “It’s fast enough to blow by guys and get the job done,” he said. Becoming more consistent with his off-speed pitches is something that would “help me tremendously. I have grown as a baseball player throughout the years and worked on my craft. I am almost there. Everyone needs to improve in something. From day one when you get drafted until the end of your career, you are always under a microscope.”

With his work ethic always a focus, Bellatti has admired his father’s work ethic, whom he calls his biggest role model. His father works all night at Target and then is a teacher’s aide at a school full time.

Another role model was his maternal grandfather, Stanley McCrea. They would watch San Diego Padres games together.

Bellatti was an avid baseball card collector growing up, especially of Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn, who was an eight-time National League batting champion. He was a five-time All-Star right fielder for the Padres from 1982 to 2001.

Being drafted and the accident have been the most significant turning points of Bellatti’s life, he said.

“No matter who you are, God is always there for you. He has a path for you. Believe in that path. Believing in myself, believing in my God-given ability, working hard, dedication and my faith help me.

“I think I have become a better man spiritually. In high school, I was kind of a goof ball and I had to grow up. Now I am grown up and I do believe that I am more of a man and I can handle certain things in a different way than I would have years ago.”

Bellatti said he found a second chance spiritually. “Jesus sacrificed His life for us. What that means to me is to cherish every single moment day in and day out; just cherish life.”