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David Platt, new president of the International Mission Board (IMB), interacts with schoolchildren in Indonesia.

Platt, 36, was elected Aug. 27 by IMB trustees. The influential author of 'Radical' and pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, took office immediately upon election and preached during that night's missionary appointment service, which included the appointment of at least four Alabama Baptists. Platt returned to Birmingham to preach at Brook Hills through Sept. 14 before wrapping up his time in the state.



BP photo

New leadership

Birmingham pastor, 'Radical' author David Platt elected new IMB president

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

On any given Sunday, out-of-state license plates can be found sprinkled among the thousands of cars sitting in the parking lot at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

Countless travelers whose journey takes them through Alabama have been known to detour down Highway 280 onto Highway 119 to attend one of the three worship hours at the church. Their purpose? To hear Pastor David Platt preach in person.

Platt — who has gained international fame for his Bible teaching, preaching, writing and disciple-making focus — has become a rock

star of sorts for Alabama Baptists. Churches across the nation use his books for discipleship classes. Individuals across the world listen to his podcasts. Organizers of preaching conferences and gospel-focused panel discussions vie for a slot on his calendar.

Attendance through simulcast of his six-hour Secret Church discipleship training events continue to grow. He has had more than 50,000 participants at one time.

The momentum is building around him, and the trustees of the International Mission Board (IMB) decided they want a piece of it — he was elected IMB president Aug. 27 and took office immediately.

His ability to re-engage Southern Baptists who have walked away

from the traditional denominational routines as well as believers across denominations and generations has attracted the attention of many.

A wave of excitement rippled across social media outlets with the announcement. Now it's "cool to be Southern Baptist," some voices say.

But not everyone is excited about the potential new path Platt may blaze. Concerns about the future of the IMB, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and Cooperative Program giving have been vocalized for weeks, months and even years as he was rumored to be the golden child sitting in the wings for the IMB position (see story, page 2).

Platt assured members of the Southern Baptist media about two hours after his election that he

wants to help convince all Southern Baptists that cooperation within associations, state conventions and at all SBC levels is "the wisest, most effective means for working together with other churches to see the gospel spread."

He also wants the current IMB paradigm where the board "takes care" of sending missionaries to be "turned upside down so that the local church is the agent that sends missionaries and shepherds missionaries, and the IMB comes alongside local churches to do that."

Platt succeeds Tom Elliff, 70, who had served in the role since March 2011.

For more details on Platt, his election or the IMB, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org.

"We talk all the time at Brook Hills about laying down a blank check with our lives before God ... to make His glory known."

David Platt
president, International Mission Board

COMMENT

My Reasons for Endorsing Platt as IMB President

It has been a high and holy privilege to serve on the presidential selection team for the International Mission Board (IMB). We started this unsolicited yet remarkable journey Feb. 26, 2014, in Austin, Texas. The Lord welded our diverse search team of 15 together under the exceptional leadership of David Uth. Our only agenda was to find the most effective leader for the most important enterprise on earth, which is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with all perishing people.

After our committee created a solid foundation of prayer and a biblically based profile for our new leader, we solicited almost 2,000 opinion surveys and received more than 100 nominations for the presidency. Our Holy Spirit-guided process of thorough investigation of the candidates' abilities coupled with thoughtful projections of our future opportunities led us to eventually focus on David Platt. If you would have been part of the process of the interviews and receiving the same promptings of God's Spirit, I am confident that you would be joining me in affirming that David is God's anointed leader for the IMB.

David is a Bible-driven, Spirit-led, totally devoted follower of King Jesus. He is a "once in a generation" servant-leader. He has become the face and voice of missions mobilization in America. David is a transformational leader who possesses the capacity to reinvigorate our dangerously declining IMB, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and funding systems.

Kingdom impact

Let me frame the reality of our current status: the number of IMB missionaries has dropped in the last 7 years from 5,620 to 4,860 and our current financial resources will only support 4,200. Additionally the SBC membership has declined for the last 6 years. We baptized 314,000 people last year, which equals a 60-year low. Fifteen percent of our SBC churches are actively dying and 70 percent are plateaued. If we remain on these trajectories our Kingdom impact will evaporate and be replaced with irrelevance.

Our primary concerns linked to David were Calvinism and a lack of Cooperative Program (CP) support that merit our attention and explanation.



GUEST
EDITORIAL
By Jay Wolf
IMB trustee

1. David is not a Calvinist — he is a Jesus man.

After an aggregate of nine hours of interviews, I am completely confident that David has a thoroughly biblical theology, worldview and missiology that is very similar to mine and most Baptists. However, his amazing ability to correlate and articulate biblical truth places him in a singular category. He has memorized a massive amount of God's Word. David is extremely intelligent and possesses a near photographic memory. Yet he is truly humble in attitude, actions and lifestyle. He is simply an authentic Jesus man.

David resolutely affirmed he will not lead the IMB to be a Calvinistic organization. David completely supports the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

He acknowledges that God is sovereign yet man is responsible. David's primary message is simple: Driven by God's love and humanity's lostness we are compelled to take the gospel to all perishing people.

Treasured Kingdom partners, we must remember that our enemy is Satan and lostness, not our brothers and sisters in Christ. Unnecessary theological division will only distract us from doing the Great Commission assignment together. We agree on the basics of the gospel, which contains Christ's clear mandate to take the saving message of Jesus to all perishing people.

2. David's CP support.

A. In 2014, The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, will give \$1.3 million to Southern Baptist missions causes, which amounts to 13.8 percent of their budget. Their other missions expenditures elevates their total missions giving amount to an impressive \$3.3 million.

B. Through the specific channel of the CP,

Brook Hills gave \$25,000. When our committee talked with David about this low amount for their CP giving, he sincerely acknowledged that he made a mistake in not supporting the CP at a better level and plans to correct it. Furthermore he acknowledged that he was a product of the CP and should have been more circumspect in supporting it. He pledged to become a passionate advocate of the CP.

C. David encouraged us greatly by sharing that he had come to a place of understanding that "our institutions are vital to sustaining movements." Consequently he affirmed the value of our entities.

Infusion of energy

D. Russell D. Moore, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, provided the powerful insight that David as the IMB president could bring a new infusion of energy and enthusiasm for the CP as he stands with other SBC leaders and freshly articulates to a disengaged younger generation the need to be mobilized for doing the Great Commission and fuel these Kingdom causes by supporting our cooperative giving mechanisms.

I am convinced that God will not only use David to mobilize the younger generations but he will bring a desperately needed renaissance to the IMB, SBC and our financial support systems.

And lastly our support for

David was powerfully amplified by Tom Elliff, outgoing IMB president, and Clyde Meador, IMB executive vice president, giving tearful affirmation that they are 100 percent convinced that God's leader for the IMB is David Platt.

After immense and intense investigation and intercession, the Lord has led me to fully support David Platt as the next president of the IMB. I would urge you to use your influence to rally our SBC teammates around our singular new leader and "finish the task" as we urgently take the gospel to all perishing people.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jay Wolf is pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and is a trustee of the International Mission Board (IMB). He served on the 15-member IMB search committee that nominated David Platt for president.

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your influence to rally
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See article
on David Platt's election
as new IMB president
on page 1.



"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 Neisha Fuson

L. Lavon Gray (second from right) signs a copy of the book 'Hungry for Worship,' which he co-authored with Frank Page (right), president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. The pair shared about the book's contents Aug. 14 at the national Woman's Missionary Union headquarters in Birmingham.

'Hungry for Worship'

Co-authors Gray, Page discuss worship challenges churches face

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

Picture your church this Sunday morning. You walk in, sit down and see the minister of music walk out lugging a large golden calf much like the one the children of Israel constructed. He places the calf at the center of the stage and the rest of the choir and worship team begin to worship the calf, leading you to do the same.

It may seem like an exaggerated and outlandish idea but according to L. Lavon Gray, associate dean for Liberty University's School of Music and co-author of "Hungry for Worship," Christians have reached that point in the Church today.

"While we have not collected gold from our people and not constructed an actual golden calf, I do believe we have sanctimoniously lifted music and placed it in the center of our platforms every Sunday morning," said Gray, who also serves as minister of music for First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.

Keeping focused

"We've begun to worship music and the methodology of music rather than using it for what it's intended to do (as worship) and ... then putting our focus on God and Him at the center," Gray said.

Gray and co-author Frank Page, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, met with more than 70 church leaders and others at the national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) headquarters in Birmingham on Aug. 14 to

discuss aspects of the 10 main worship challenges churches face today.

The duo added bits of humor to the theological truths and practical experiences they used to write the book, recently released by New Hope Publishers, the publishing arm of WMU.

Page outlined chapter three of "Hungry for Worship," which referenced an "'American Idol' experience" in many churches.

"The lights are on. The cameras are rolling. The judges are in place," Page said, noting that any time a leader in the church goes on stage to lead music, preach or teach a Sunday School lesson, all eyes are on him or her and the people in the pew immediately become a critical audience.

But Page was not pointing fingers. He admitted that he himself has been a judge of worship or preaching at times.

"How many times have I left a service and said, 'That was great preaching' or 'Wow, the worship was so good'?"

"How many times do you leave and say, 'I worshipped today' and 'Don't we have a great God?' That's what we are supposed to hear ... and experience is the greatness of God," Page said.

He added that if worship is authentic it

will always lead to missions and evangelism.

Gray noted that worship also is a dialogue — it's "always a response to the revelation of God."

"Worship is not a purpose of the Church, it is a lifeline. If we don't have worship we have no power to do anything else," Gray said.

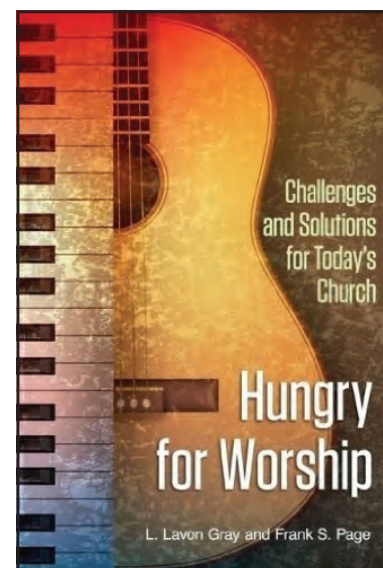
And music is not the end goal, he added. "It's a functional art. It is music with a higher purpose. We use it as a tool to share the gospel. If it ever becomes an end in and of itself, we've lost our focus."

Some of the other chapters in the book address consumerism, segregated worship, navigating a post worship-war culture, worship in a multiethnic congregation and technology in worship.

Gray encouraged participants to remember, "if you worship music, your life is never going to be changed. It's not going to

be the latest greatest song that sustains you, it's going to be the power of Christ that sustains you."

And Gray said if you are wondering if you worship music more than God, ask yourself this question: "If music was taken away this Sunday, how strong would my worship commitment be?"





IMB photo

'Pray here for Ukraine,' the sign reads. A Christian holds the sign for drivers to see as they drive past a prayer tent at a busy street corner in Donetsk in eastern Ukraine. Christians gather at 6 p.m. every evening to pray for their country.

Running for cover

Fear, uncertainty carry loud voices in eastern Ukraine as violence continues

By Ava Thomas and Marc Ira Hooks
International Mission Board

Sasha's shoe repair shop has always sounded a bit like a percussion section. But lately it's had some deep, terrifying bass in the background.

Guns. Artillery. Bombs.

"Every day you can hear it," Sasha said. His business sits in the middle of Donetsk, a city that along with a large section of eastern Ukraine voted to declare its independence this past May.

Since April, pro-Russian separatists have been fighting the Ukrainian army for control of the region. They've rallied in the streets. They've taken over government buildings. They took over the airport. They shot down a military helicopter.

It's been a bloodbath. Hundreds have died in the region.

And evangelical believers have come under attack, specifically because of their faith.

Oleksii Melnychuk, president of Donetsk Christian University, said separatists recently seized several buildings on the school campus in order to house personnel and even hostages from other parts of the city.

While he doesn't think this specific incident was an act of persecution, he says many pastors, churches and believers in eastern Ukraine have suffered just because they are believers.

It's not been the easiest season for Christ-

followers, said Tom Long, a Southern Baptist representative who has called Donetsk home for the past four years.

But it isn't stopping believers from sharing their faith.

Still witnessing

One pastor in Donetsk, Sergey Kosyak, was beaten because he was connected with an evangelical prayer tent. Following his release, he returned to a building the separatists have occupied since April.

Long said, "He has gone there with a cou-

ple of his friends and witnessed to a couple of the guys standing guard around the building. He has found some of them to be willing at least to take the New Testament."

In nearby Sloviansk the buried bodies of a deacon, a worship leader and two pastors' sons were discovered in June when the Ukrainian army recaptured the city from separatists. According to eyewitnesses, a group of armed militants entered Holy Trinity Church during Sunday services and dragged the four men out. Evidence suggests they were tortured and killed just days after being abducted.

Melnichuk added that another church in Sloviansk was taken by separatists and used to house heavy arms — more than three trucks were needed to remove them once separatists were driven from the city.

Sasha said, "Because of where I'm located I can see much of what is taking place in the city [of Donetsk]. Our business of course

"As believers, we do not have citizenship — we live without a citizenship on the earth."

Sasha
believer in Donetsk, Ukraine

has fallen because most people are afraid to be out on the street ... there are many people who live in fear."

For a while, Long had a bird's-eye view of the unrest in Donetsk.

His apartment is dead center of the city. He's watched families attempt to live normally, taking long walks in the park while separatists nearby carry Kalashnikov rifles.

"I've grown to love [Donetsk], a place that I call home and friends who have become like family to me," Long said. "To see the fear that's on their faces and in their hearts and on their mouths really hurts me."

He gets teary when he talks about it.

"I have lived off and on in this country for the last 20 years," Long said, "and to see what is taking place right now is very difficult, very difficult."

But not as difficult as leaving.

When the fighting got intense, he was forced to pack his bags and move to the capital, Kiev. He left his family of friends — Sasha included — in the midst of the fray.

Long doesn't know when he will get to go back.

'Difficult to plan ahead'

Fear and uncertainty have loud voices in Donetsk right now.

"Most of my friends there are becoming more and more afraid of what's happening and more fearful of what tomorrow holds," Long said. "They feel like there is so much uncertainty that it's difficult to plan ahead."

Melnychuk tries to make sense of the turmoil in his country. He believes the so-called separatists are not actually separatists at all.

"They are people with the idea of restoring the Russian world," he said. "They believe that those territories used to be the Russian Empire and they need to take it back to the Russian Empire." He noted that the current prime minister of the newly formed People's Republic of Donetsk is a Russian citizen.

The persecution taking place, Melnychuk surmises, comes from differences between Orthodox and evangelical believers.

"They have their religious view that the Orthodox church is supposed to be the core and the essence [of life]," he said. "They are not tolerant to any other religion."

Many Orthodox believers consider evangelicals to be a sect, or cult, he said.

"In general, they relate us to the West because they believe all the sects came to life due to the influence from the West," Melnychuk said, adding that historically the people in that part of the world are supposed to be Orthodox.

"They believe that the Protestants, [and] the sectarians are foreign to their worldview and their understanding of what the 'New Russia' — or their [independent] republic — is supposed to be."

Melnychuk said he believes that when people do not hear God speaking, He chooses to attract people's attention through things such as persecution of believers.

"He is trying to get their attention," he said. "Sometimes people here need to leave their homes or their cars and run. It is quite a purifying experience."

These days when Sasha gets the chance to preach at his local Baptist church, he tries to counter the chaos. He reminds his brothers and sisters of who they really are, where they really live.

"As believers, we do not have citizenship — we live without a citizenship on the earth," he said. "I preach that God has already prepared a place for us and our heart needs to be there."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. ☛

Ministering from afar

Alabama Baptists adapt missions efforts in Ukraine during unrest

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

When Ashley Ivey sees Ukraine in the news — the violence, the bombs, the downed aircraft — or overhears a conversation about it, she thinks of a place she almost called home for a while.

"My ears definitely perk up whenever I hear (the word) Ukraine," she said. "I automatically tune in to that conversation or the news."

"Whenever you know the names and stories ... it's a new realization that there are people over there going through a really tough time."

Ivey was within a week of moving to western Ukraine to serve in a missions position when everything changed. She had spent time studying about the country and the city of Rivney where she was supposed to live with a pastor's family while she taught English as a Second Language (ESL) for a semester.

The fighting and unrest escalated in February, about the same time she had finally completed more than six months of paperwork and preparation to go. She had her ticket in hand, had transitioned out of her place of employment and had given up her apartment.

And then "we pulled the plug," said Jim Bradley, chairman of the missions committee for First Baptist Church, Opp, the church that recruited Ivey, a member of South Coast Church, Mobile, for the ESL position.

"We felt we should not send her into that situation even though the western side of the country is not in turmoil," Bradley said. "It was just too uncertain."

A number of U.S. churches have postponed or canceled their plans to do ministry in Ukraine this year because of the unrest. But Christian workers in that region of the world say there is still much that churches "back home" can do.

Prayer needed

Tim Johnson, a Southern Baptist representative in Ukraine, said the U.S. Church has a "great role" in reaching out to Ukraine during these difficult times by creating awareness, continuing to pray and being a part of outreach efforts.

"Those are great ways for the Church to continue to support our Ukrainian brothers and sisters," he said. Christians can pray for God to clear the way for the Spirit to move amid war, Johnson added.

"It's just hard when you know that there's church-planting efforts going on, there's desire to see new work take place, but at the same time there's that cloud of fear that hangs in the air," he said. "So we pray for that to dissipate and that we could have a chance to move forward with clear skies."

Bradley said that while First, Opp, has had to adapt its missions efforts in Ukraine this year, church members continue to stay informed about the country and stay in touch with their ministry partners in Rivney.

"We want to stay involved. We have friends there and we don't want to leave them."

Jim Bradley
FBC Opp

"We want to stay involved," he said. "We have friends there and we don't want to leave them. We want to continue supporting them."

Noting he and other church leaders stay in touch with their contacts in Rivney through email, Bradley said, "They are very upbeat and are continuing to do the Lord's work. They are keeping their wits about them and are going forward with their work."

First, Opp, supports Rivney Baptist Association — which has 110 member churches — financially and by sending teams, Bradley said. "Our pastor Randy Breedlove is a big supporter of our missions efforts on all fronts and led our past two teams to Ukraine," he noted.

The church launched its partnership efforts with Rivney Association around 2006 when the Alabama Baptist State Convention entered into a six-year partnership with national Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries in Ukraine.

Larry Cummings, then director of missions (DOM) for Covington Baptist Association, encouraged the churches in the association to get involved, and First, Opp, was among the churches that found ministry opportunities there.

"When Otis Corbitt came as director of missions, he continued the partnership with Ukraine and is a big supporter of the missions work in the association, but the official partnership agreement has now expired," Bradley said. Still a few churches in Covington Association and across the state have continued their partnership efforts.

"Mostly what we do is support church plants and provide monthly stipends for church planters," Bradley explained. "We also

send teams ... sometimes to teach classes, sometimes to help with summer camps."

One of the church plants First, Opp, members have invested in, Transformation Church, has grown to more than 50 members. "They held the summer camp we financially supported this year," Bradley said. "We were supposed to send a team over, but we canceled that trip because of the unrest."

Transformation Church uses the summer camp as an outreach tool, Bradley said, noting more than half of the 100-plus children in attendance are typically unchurched.

Reports also came to Bradley that some of the children impacted by the fighting in eastern Ukraine were sent to the camp.

While pleased with the results of the summer camp, Bradley noted there have been moments church members in Opp have "felt a bit guilty" for not being present in Ukraine.

"Some of us were willing to go, but it makes better sense not to," he said.

So they continue to pray, watch the news with anticipation and eagerly await their next email update.

And the same thing is happening at the opposite end and corner of the state in Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association.

DOM Eddy Garner said, "The unrest in Ukraine has definitely adjusted our plans. ... We were supposed to be in Ukraine about this time to work with Southern Baptist missionaries from Alabama Tim and Donna Akers."

"We adopted the Akerses through the Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections partnership and have sent teams the past two years, but with the unrest we decided to wait until things got a little more settled," Garner said.

"We've been working with them to plant churches and send teams to help with Vacation Bible Schools and do medical missions," he said. "We stay connected through email and Skype and are praying with them through the unrest."

For more information on partnering with missionaries in Ukraine from Alabama, contact Reggie Quimby at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 239, or email rquimby@alsbom.org.

To contribute to the work of Southern Baptist representatives who are helping repair homes and broken lives in Ukraine, email rebirtheasternukraine@gmail.com. (IMB contributed)



IVEY

A city ablaze



IMB photo

A board erected in front of the Trade Unions building in Odessa, Ukraine, memorializes people who died in a fire there in May.

Deadly political rally ignites Ukrainian church to share peace in Odessa

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

It seemed like an ordinary spring day when 12-year-old Josh Craig arrived home from school. His family was planning a party that evening and the house was already filling with the smell of food and the sound of laughter.

But on the other side of town an Odessa landmark was filling with smoke.

Josh's mother, Rachel, said, "We had a big graduation party planned here so I was really busy getting ready. But Josh walked in the door and said, 'Mom, when I left school, out in the street there were masked military men with big guns.'"

Josh had wandered into the middle of the May 2 political clash between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian groups that eventually turned deadly. After he caught the bus home, the demonstration escalated until Odessa's Trades Union building burned.

The stories about what happened differ, but more than 40 people died in the fire. According to news sources, it was the worst violence in the Black Sea port since President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted in February.

And the city became a "surprising" flashpoint for a nation in crisis.

Surprising, said Josh's father, Leonard, because "Odessa prides itself as being probably the most tolerant city in Ukraine."

Surprising, said Rachel, because even though parts of the country have been divided along Russian-Ukrainian lines since late 2013, many of her Ukrainian friends are married to Russians. They go to her church. They're raising their families together.

"People don't really want to get involved in politics here. Everybody wants to ... enjoy their lives," she said.

The people of Odessa are Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Jews, "just name it," said Leonard, who along with his wife serves as a Southern Baptist representative in Odessa. "It's such a rich mixture of cultures that manage to live peacefully and make the city what it is."

It's a city that loves the arts. Its opera house is world-renowned. It's a dream city for Rachel, who was a band and orchestra director back in the United States.

"We moved here seven years ago, and I started a community orchestra because our children play string instruments," she said.

But nothing could prepare her family for how the quiet people of Odessa — or the Church — would respond in the wake of the May 2 fire.

Odessans hold wildly varied views of what happened that day in the center of the city. The burned-out union building is full of homemade memorials and unanswered questions.

Opposing sides

"There was violence," Leonard said, with the crowd throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at each other while others were believed to be shooting guns. "Some say they were on the pro-Russian side, others said they were on the pro-Ukrainian side," he explained.

Either way the local police were overwhelmed. Grief over the deaths drove Leonard to tears. The initial reaction on the street was staggering in a different way, he said.

"Some of the hardest things for me have been to talk to people or to hear comments when they say, 'But these guys were traitors, you know? They're traitors, so they got what they deserved,'" Leonard said.

It was a popular opinion — even for church members, said Leonard's pastor, Alex.

"The first reaction from the church, a lot of whom are pro-Ukrainian — it was almost elation," Alex said.

"It was like, 'Well, they finally got what they deserved.' They didn't know the full scale of the tragedy at that point, but they knew that people had died and burned."

But it was not long before things got personal.

People began getting phone calls letting them know that their neighbors, their friends' sons, their cousins' daughters were among the dead.

One of the people who died in the fire — a pro-Russian — was the dad of a young girl

who attended Alex's church. Another church member, a pro-Ukrainian, was seriously injured by shrapnel that lodged in his lung.

When reality started to sink in, church members "realized it was a tragedy, and people started changing their views and the way they felt about it," Alex said.

They felt a shameful shock, Leonard said. The whole city did.

"Your heart breaks because no matter how much you disagree with someone, burning them down is never an option," he said. "We are Christians. We can't condone this."

A lull fell over the city and potentially controversial elections came and went uneventfully. It seemed nobody dared move, else they disrupt the peaceful balance Odessa had slipped back into, Leonard said. "It was like everybody said, 'That's enough. Too many people have died already.'"

But that didn't stop church members from struggling to control their political fervor, a firestorm that threatened to overshadow the gospel in a time of extreme openness, he said.

Churchgoers divided themselves along political lines. Pastors preached sermons with blatant political overtones. Those who didn't agree stopped going.

"This is kind of the hardest thing to deal with. You see it in the culture everywhere, that the culture is very divided, politicized, polarized. But to see that in the Church, it is quite disturbing," Leonard said.

Shook to the core

It disturbed Alex to his core. He began to re-evaluate his relationship with Christ and his responsibility to his church.

"I am pretty pro-Ukrainian," he said. "But when this tragedy happened, in the church there were such contrasting views. I realized it was important to preach only the love of Christ and keep the peace rather than say or do anything as a minister that would create conflict in the church."

And as he did, the church began to stir.

"It woke up the church," Alex said. "People realized that there were more important things than just doing church business as usual. People are much more aware of the need of prayer for the government, for peace, for needs other than their own."

And, he said, they are more aware of a need to share the peace only Jesus Christ can bring.

"People are much more aware of the need of prayer for the government, for peace, for needs other than their own."

**Alex
local church pastor**

"This fear causes a lot of questions," Alex said. "They (the people of Odessa) are anxious. They want to know what's happening. They are asking eternal questions. In a way, yes, they are in fear but in a way the political trouble also has helped people wake up to spiritual realities."

Leonard agreed. "I think all this is an open wound," he said. "It needs nursing — spiritual nursing — and because of that there is great opportunity. Where there is

a wound, where there is a tremendous need, there is an openness to the gospel. I think that out of this tragedy, this is one of the good things we've seen."

On the night of the graduation party, 30 of the Craigs' friends were gathered around a bonfire in the backyard when they started getting text messages letting them know about the fire and that people were dying.

The celebration melted into a gathering of heavy hearts.

"We had a prayer meeting for a good half hour or so," Leonard said. "Everybody was praying, and there is this wonderful song about we're praying for Ukraine — everybody knows that song in Ukraine. So we prayed that song as well, and all the neighbors could hear it."

He hopes the neighbors hear their message of peace from the fire for a long, long time to come.

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



CRAIG

PRAYERS FOR UKRAINE



IMB graphic

“We don’t want to ever forget that it’s really important for us to support and encourage. ... We have a window of opportunity to change the spiritual landscape of this nation, and that’s what we’re trying to do.”

Joel Ragains
Kiev Theological Seminary

Wartime witnessing

Church planters in Ukraine find efforts difficult but not without hope

By Ava Thomas
International Mission Board

Since Andrei moved to Ukraine from Belarus three years ago, he has learned some things.

He has learned how to plant a church. And he has learned what to use to treat the symptoms of a tear gas attack.

Milk. He has drunk it himself sitting in class at Kiev Theological Seminary after inhaling tear gas and being dangerously close to the Molotov cocktails going off in the city center.

“One of my ears was out, for a day probably, from the bombs,” said Andrei, who spent dozens of nights over the winter months in Kiev’s Maidan, the square where political demonstrations escalated into a bloodbath that left about a hundred people dead this past February.

Joel Ragains, Southern Baptist representative and co-director of the church-planting program at the seminary, has Andrei’s photo pinned to a wall map of Ukraine. He stares at it. Prays for him.

And prays for the others.

Andrei’s not the only one who’s been right in the middle of the fray.

“I think about two of our students who have just recently graduated from our program — young guys,” Ragains said. “One

came here four years ago, single and since coming he met his wife and now has a little baby. The other fellow, Sasha, is still single.”

They planted a church in Donetsk, a city in eastern Ukraine that suddenly became the center of the nation’s violence after things died down in Kiev.

They’ve had to make adjustments, Ragains said. They’ve been targeted at times.

But “it’s been good in the fact that they are thinking outward as far as how can we serve the body of Christ as far as what’s going on here now.”

It hasn’t been an easy road, he said.

“One of my students had just planted a church in this particular area, and he told us ... ‘They’ve told me I can’t use this building anymore.’”

Another seminary graduate facing threats is unsure whether they’ll get to stay or have to move.

“It’s just very disheartening to see what’s happening,” Ragains said.

But it’s not without hope.

“It’s difficult but I think, underneath all that, the encouraging thing is that their faith is strong,” he said. “They’re going to continue doing what they’re doing regardless of what’s going to happen. They’re committed to Jesus Christ first of all. They just really need our prayers right now because they are hurting.”

It’s surreal, Ragains said. But he doesn’t want to squander the opportunity. “We don’t want to ever forget that it’s really important for us to support and encourage. ... We have a window of opportunity to change the spiritual landscape of this nation, and that’s what we’re trying to do.”

He’s got a band of seminary students and graduates with him.

Andrei is one. And he’s not backing down from the task.

“It’s war,” he said. “Let’s call things by their names — it’s war. But it’s a really good time for revival.”



IMB photo

Andrei (right), a church-planting student, talks with Joel Ragains, co-director of the church-planting program at Kiev Theological Seminary.

Words of encouragement

FBC Trussville member shares love by way of cards

By Sandra Bearden
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Jeanne Crow has a habit she doesn't intend to break.

For nearly 50 years the First Baptist Church, Trussville, member has mailed get well cards, personal notes and devotional publications to sick friends and fellow members, the bereaved and others. But after retiring from her nursing career and the death of her husband, Cecil, her income fell as postage and card costs rose.

So at the age of 71, she decided to find a job in order to feed her card habit. Since 1996, she's been employed by Alabama Orthopedic, Spine & Sports Medicine Associates in Birmingham, using her R.N. background to archive medical records and insurance claims.

Dependable, conscientious

"As a retired nurse she still had a lot to give," said Orlean Bruce, administrative assistant at the clinic. "She has always been dependable and conscientious, taking pride in her work. And her card ministry has meant so much to so many people."

Although cards are her hallmark, Jeanne's service

has ranged across many ages and ministries. She taught 3-year-olds in Sunday School for 25 years where co-teacher, Laura Joiner, recalled her kindness, dependability and ability to fit Bible stories "to the attention span" of her students.

She also used both her nursing and teaching backgrounds on missions trips to Ecuador. With friend and fellow nurse, Louise Morrison, she established a parish-nursing ministry on Wednesday nights where members could have basic vital signs checked. And she took both Bible studies and nursing skills to home-bound friends — a ministry that often continued for years.

After turning 90 recently, Crow is still working. But she will soon move to Prattville to live with her niece, Celeste Brewer. To show appreciation

for Crow's longtime Christian service, First, Trussville, declared Aug. 24 as "Jeanne Crow Day."

In the morning services the church showered her with flowers, donations in her honor and a mailbox filled with cards of appreciation.

And there's no indication her ministry will stop. Brewer, a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, said, "She's already asked me about card shop locations in Prattville."



CROW

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Lee Gilliland



GILLILAND

Chandler Mountain Baptist Church,
Steele
St. Clair Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "A Child of the King"

HOBBIES: Working in yard; helping neighbors

FAMILY STATUS: Wife of 19 years, Mary; wife of 38 years until her death, Dot; late children, Jimmy Lee Gilliland and Barry Neal Gilliland; stepchildren, Amy Murphree and Bryan Beard; two step-grandchildren; one step-great-grandchild

The Alabama Baptist caught Lee Gilliland, 78, just as he was about to spruce up flowerbeds at his church before a homecoming celebration. A deacon, chairman of the house and property committee, chairman of the church's cemetery committee, bus driver for senior citizens' trips and choir member, Gilliland is a servant of God and country. He has been a Sunday School teacher, Discipleship Training director, team member of St. Clair Baptist Association Disaster Relief's chainsaw unit and a member of a pastor search committee. He also served eight years in the Alabama Army National Guard. Gilliland retired after 31 years with the Alabama Department of Transportation.

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

A: My father-in-law and mother-in-law, my dad and mother, my uncle Fred Rogers and my wife Dot. I was saved when I was 30 years old. I wasted a lot of years that I wish I had not wasted. I've been serving the Lord since. I'm so happy.

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

A: I was led into a lot of it by a young preacher whose name was Lewis Haney. He had a strong influence on me as a new Christian. I served in another church as a youth minister for about nine years. That church was Steele Baptist Church.

Q: What does the ministry work demand?

A: It demands that I be faithful to my church and faithful to the Lord. Therefore I give a lot of time to my church.

Q: What do you get from the ministry work?

A: I just get a great big blessing. I don't receive compensation for anything I do. But I'm so blessed to have health and be able to do what I do.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: They do help me. My wife prays for me.

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

A: As long as the Lord gives me good health and strength I want to stay involved. [While I am still in good health and able] I would like to teach the younger people to do the work that I do.

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

A: It'll give me a lot of peace of mind when I get older to know that I served God to the best of my ability.

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

A: All the difference. All the difference in the world. Before Jesus, I was just floundering around on this earth in sin. Since Jesus, I've been trying to dedicate my life to His ministry and point people to Christ. 🙏

SBOM hosts Literacy Missions Conference



Photo by Doug Rogers

The State Board of Missions hosted a Literacy Missions Conference Aug. 8-9 at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, which drew 65 participants. Of those, 45 were trained in either English as a Second Language, Adult Reading and Writing, Tutoring Children and Youth or Bible Storytelling, with another 20 participating in a variety of one-hour advanced workshops.

Alabama Baptist Convention State Board of Missions

ONE MISSION:
The Great Commission

ONE PROGRAM:
The Cooperative Program

MANY MINISTRIES:
Great Commission Ministries

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

Even Churches Need a Report Card



kept good records and I also led the way for my churches to do an Annual Church Profile (ACP), which was sent to the State Board of Missions each year. At least one Baptist commentator has called the ACP a “church report card.”

In recent years, for several reasons, some churches have chosen not to be involved in sending in an ACP which is used in research by various people. The Alabama Baptist Convention and the SBC need this information for accurate record keeping purposes. To not be a participant in this information sharing leaves gaping holes in the research process.

When our new SBC president, Ronnie Floyd, visited Alabama recently, he and I discussed many topics of interest and concern. One of them was the need for churches to participate in the Annual Church Profile. We both

agreed that this information represents the vital signs for ascertaining, to a measurable degree, the health of the local church. It also aids those seeking to determine the vital signs of Baptist life as a whole.

In the late 1990s, 98 percent of Alabama Baptist churches participated in the ACP process. Last year that percentage had dropped to 83 percent. With some researchers forecasting a decline

in SBC life, my

process is relatively simple and we are seeking to simplify it further. Rest assured that we all want the ACP to be both simple in form and substantive in nature.

For now, let us do our church report card and be a part of the ACP process. I am hopeful that we in Alabama Baptist life can return to at least 90 percent participation in the near future. Your support of this endeavor may be off the radar, but believe me this information helps us learn about ourselves and also what we need to do differently and better under our Lord’s guidance for the future. I want to thank you in advance for your

involvement.

For more information about the Annual Church Profile, please contact State Missionary Mickey Crawford at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 281, or (334) 613-2281, mcrawford@alsbom.org.



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

concern is that we are actually experiencing more percentage decline in churches reporting their vital signs data via the ACP than in other arenas.

My appeal to you as a church leader is to make sure you prepare and send in the ACP. It will assist you in your ministry and it will help others do so across the landscape of Baptist life. The

During my early school years, I can remember bringing home a report card for my parents to examine. Sometimes I was a bit ashamed for them to see it, but doing so was a requirement and needful. Grades and comments by teachers were vitally important in the educational accountability process. Areas of improvement were noted, and I was the better for it.

Most local churches keep records so they can measure progress or track areas of needed attention. Although there is no Biblical requirement for this record keeping, it does make good sense. As a pastor, I made sure we

Isaiah 41:10



WMU FALL MISSIONS FESTIVALS

FALL MISSIONS FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN

October 10-11, 2014 or October 17-18, 2014

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

Begins at 5 p.m. Friday, concludes at 3 p.m. Saturday

COST: \$50 per person (includes lodging and meals)

At Fall Missions Festival, children will learn about what God is doing in the Ivory Coast. Children grades 1-6 and their leaders will hear from missionaries serving in the Ivory Coast as well as experience African culture through food, customs and other activities led by young adults who love and serve the Lord and have a heart for children and for missions.

For more information, go online to www.alabamawmu.org or contact Julie McGraw at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 226, or (334) 613-2226, jmcgraw@alsbom.org.

FALL MISSIONS FESTIVAL FOR ADULTS

October 21, 2014 or October 23, 2014

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

10 a.m.-3 p.m.

COST: \$16 per person (includes lunch)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: October 14

Held on the beautiful campus of WorldSong, this year's festival will focus on the amazing sights and sounds of the Ivory Coast, the emphasis area for the 2014 International Mission Study. You will have opportunities to learn from and interact with missionaries who recently returned from serving in this area of the world. We'll pray together and enjoy other special activities. The Fall Missions Festival for Adults is open to adults of all ages.

For more information, go online to www.alabamawmu.org or contact Julie McGraw at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 226, or (334) 613-2226, jmcgraw@alsbom.org.

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



alsbom.org/cp



I believe in the Cooperative Program because it's biblical. The Apostle Paul taught us this important truth through the collection for the impoverished Jerusalem church (2 Corinthians 9:2). Southern Baptist churches can do far more together than we can do alone in advancing His Kingdom. The CP provides an opportunity for every Christian and church to participate in the Great Commission.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it's beneficial. The Southern Baptist missionary force in state conventions, North America and internationally is second to none. Our missionary enterprise is the envy of the evangelical world. Annually more than 100,000 converts are baptized, and more than 6,000 churches are planted through the influence of our missionaries.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it's our bedrock. Our gifts through the local church provide an incredible Kingdom infrastructure. Institutions of Christian higher learning educate our children, and seminaries equip our ministers and missionaries. Myriad entities provide opportunities for spiritual enrichment and equipping. State conventions render support for ministers and churches, enabling them to effectively penetrate the darkness with the Gospel in their communities.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it's a blessing. Members of churches and congregations find immense satisfaction in knowing that they are a part of an incredible Kingdom enterprise. Missionary stories become our stories as we hear of God's work in our state, nation and world. We become stakeholders in Southern Baptist mission work through prayer, giving and going.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it's in my blood! As a pastor for 30 years, our churches have always contributed 10 percent or more through the CP. I've had the privilege to lead churches that have grown dramatically. We've added staff and built expensive buildings. But we've never done that at the expense of the Cooperative Program. At Canaan, we've sponsored as many as nine mission trips annually, sending nearly 100 people out of our congregation. Currently we're in the fourth year of planting a church in Guatemala with the help of the International Mission Board. It is difficult and the sacrifice is real, but we have not cut our CP gifts to fund our mission outreach as many have done. God has blessed Southern Baptists because we've been His blessing to His world through the Cooperative Program.

- Morgan Bailey, Senior Pastor
Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer



alsbom.org/cp1

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

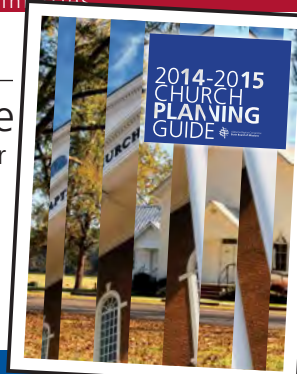
FREE

This 16-month calendar (Sept. 2014-Dec. 2015) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events.

order your 2014-2015 church planning guide

Limit 20 copies per church. To order, please call, fax or email your request to Charleen Hobbs at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 231; 334.288.2693 (fax); chobbs@alsbom.org; or order online at www.alsbom.org/cpg.

Be sure to include your name, church name, mailing address and number of guides needed (up to 20).



ALABAMA BAPTIST CONVENTION STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

FOCUS on One Mission

ENGAGE 24

24 DAYS OF PRAYER

ONEMISSIONSTUDENTS.ORG/ENGAGE24

OCTOBER

- 1 Pray for students across Alabama to be open to the Gospel message
- 2 Pray for students at Auburn University
- 3 Pray for students at Alabama State University
- 4 Pray for students at the University of Alabama in Huntsville
- 5 Pray for students at the University of Alabama in Birmingham
- 6 Pray for students at the University of North Alabama
- 7 Pray for students at the University of Montevallo
- 8 Pray for dorm rooms and classrooms to be places of peace
- 9 Pray for commuter students
- 10 Pray for students at Troy University
- 11 Pray for church collegiate groups across Alabama
- 12 Pray for students at Jacksonville State University
- 13 Pray for students at Samford University, Judson College and the University of Mobile
- 14 Pray for ENGAGE24 and for students to be bold in their witness for Christ TODAY!
- 15 Pray for students at the University of South Alabama
- 16 Pray for students at Auburn Montgomery
- 17 Pray for students at Alabama A&M University
- 18 Pray specifically for relationships with non-believers to be strengthened
- 19 Pray for students at the University of West Alabama
- 20 Pray for community college campuses across our state
- 21 Pray for students at the University of Alabama
- 22 Pray for relationships with international students on our campuses
- 23 Pray for faculty, staff and administrators on campuses across our state
- 24 Pray for campus ministers on the college campus "mission field" in Alabama

ENGAGE24 is an evangelism effort through Baptist Campus Ministries in Alabama and across the nation and is sponsored by the Office of Collegiate & Student Ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. This resource is made possible by gifts from Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR OUTSTANDING 2014 MISSION VOLUNTEER

The Office of Global Missions of the State Board of Missions would like to honor an Outstanding 2014 Mission Volunteer. YOUR HELP IS NEEDED.

**Deadline:
Monday
Sept. 22***

Please think about lay people you know whom you feel are worthy of such recognition, and let us hear from you. We realize that there are many who could fit this requirement; however, for this purpose only one individual (or couple) will be selected.

Your recommendation will make a difference. The following information is required if a person (or couple) is to be considered:

1. The name, address and phone number of the person (or couple) being nominated.
2. The name, address and phone number of the nominee's pastor, the church to which he/she/they belong and their association.
3. A list of volunteer mission service: their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Uttermost where he/she/they have participated during the past five years, including locations and dates. (If the nominee(s) has not served in at least three of the Acts 1:8 areas, please do not nominate that person.)
4. Statements supporting your nomination as **Outstanding 2014 Mission Volunteer** (why you feel he/she/they should be recognized in this manner).
5. Your signature with address, phone, church and association.

To access an Information Sheet and Nomination Application, go online to www.alsbom.org/missionsvolunteer.

If you do not have web access, request your Information Sheet and Nomination Application by contacting Ministry Assistant Virginia Gardner at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, or (334) 613-2238, vgardner@alsbom.org.

Requests may also be made by mail to Global Missions Office, Attn: Virginia Gardner, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

***Please Note:**

No phone calls or e-mail recommendations and/or endorsements accepted! Nominations must be received, not postmarked, no later than Monday, September 22, 2014.

RETURNING TO DISCIPLE MAKING

2014 Alabama Discipleship Tour with Claude King

Have you and your church missed the mark of making faithful and mature followers of Jesus Christ? Examine the motivations, strategies and resources for returning to effective and fruitful disciple making. Claude King serves as discipleship specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources. He and his wife, Reta, live in Murfreesboro, Tenn. Claude is co-author of *Experiencing God* with Henry Blackaby and *The Mind of Christ* with T.W. Hunt. He is the author of *The Call to Follow Christ* and *Come to the Lord's Table*.

Wednesday, October 1

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION
Etowah Association Office,
853 Walnut St., Gadsden
10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

(Lunch included. Cost: \$5.)
For pastors, other church staff, key leaders and teachers

Registration required by September 25.

Information: Betty Sullivan,
bettysetowahbaptist.com, (256) 547-1691

Thursday, October 2

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION - TWO TIMES
Calhoun Association Office,
1130 Woodstock Ave., Anniston
9:30 a.m.-noon (Lunch included at no cost.)
For pastors, other church staff, key leaders and teachers.

Registration required by **September 26**.

6-8:30 p.m. (Supper included at no cost.)
Evening session for bivocational pastors and wives

Registration required by September 26.

Information: John Thomas,
jthomas@cbasbc.org, (256) 237-5171

KEYBOARD FESTIVALS

November 1: Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham,

November 3: First Baptist Church, Fairhope,

November 4: First Baptist Church, Enterprise

COST: \$5 per person

For more information and to register, go online to www.alsbom.org/keyfest.

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

V.E.L.C.R.O. CHURCH

ASSIMILATION CONFERENCE



Thursday, September 25, 2014

Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham • 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Registration: www.alsbom.org/velcrochurch

Cost: \$10 per person (includes book and lunch). Check in begins at 9 a.m.

Speaker: Mike James

For more information, please contact State Missionary Daniel Edmonds at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285, dedmonds@alsbom.org.

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

PASTOR, DEACON/ SPOUSE

**THEME: WHAT'S IN
YOUR TACKLE BOX?**

RETREAT

GONE
FISHIN'



**Shocco Springs
Friday and
Saturday
September 26-27**

**Reservations/Price:
1-800-280-1105**

For other information,
please contact contact
State Missionary
Mike Jackson at
1-800-264-1225, ext.
210, or (334) 613-2210,
mjackson@alsbom.org
or Ministry Assistant
Debbie Dickey, ext. 218,
or (334) 613-2218,
ddickey@alsbom.org.



**Alabama Singing Men &
Alabama Singing Women
~ Retreats ~**

Thursday and Friday,
~ **SEPTEMBER 11-12** ~
Shocco Springs

**Last
Call**

**REGISTRATION/PRICES:
1-800-280-1105**

To inquire about joining Alabama Singing Men,
please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at
1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217,
khiggs@alsbom.org.

For membership information for Alabama
Singing Women, go online to www.alsbom.org/singingwomen
and download an application.

For information about the retreat, check online
at www.alsbom.org/asm-asw, or contact Keith
Hibbs or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland
at **1-800-264-1225**, ext. 279, or
(334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

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

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

The Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Awards will be given to individuals who have demonstrated evidence of leadership that has advanced the church in four key areas of Kingdom growth: spiritual growth, ministry advancement, missions involvement and numerical growth. The awards are given to three pastors, one from each of these categories: New Work, Established Work and Bi-Vocational.

**TROY L. MORRISON
LEADERSHIP/CHURCH
HEALTH AWARDS**

To nominate a pastor you feel has demonstrated Kingdom leadership, you may obtain an information form online at www.alsbom.org/leadership or by calling Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at **1-800-264-1225**, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, ddickey@alsbom.org. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION** of nominations is **October 15**.

**Deadline:
October 15th**

HOTEL GUIDE

HOTEL GUIDE The following hotels have offered special rates to those attending the State Convention Annual Meeting. Remember to ask for the Alabama Baptist State Convention rate when you call. Rates listed do not include taxes. This information is provided as a service and not intended to be a recommendation of any kind. If you have problems making a reservation or securing the posted rate at any of these hotels, please contact Charleen Hobbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or chobbs@alsbom.org.

Lakeside Baptist Church
2865 Old Rocky Ridge Road
Birmingham, AL 35243

SERVE

192nd Annual Session
Alabama Baptist State Convention
November 11-12, 2014
Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham

1 Hyatt Regency Birmingham

(Convention Hotel)
1000 Riverchase Galleria, Birmingham
\$122 • 800-233-1234

2 Birmingham Marriott

3590 Grandview Pkwy, Birmingham
Breakfast buffet for 2 & free Wi-Fi
\$129.95 • 205-968-3775

3 Candlewood Suites

600 Corporate Ridge Dr, Hoover
\$75 • 205-991-0272

4 Hampton Inn & Suites Hoover

4520 Galleria Blvd, Hoover
Free breakfast and Wi-Fi
\$119 • 205-380-3300

5 Hampton Inn Birmingham/Colonnade

3400 Colonnade Pkwy, Birmingham
Free breakfast and internet
\$99 • 205-967-0002

6 Hilton Perimeter Park

8 Perimeter Park South, Birmingham
Free Wi-Fi
\$125 • 205-967-2700

7 Marriott Courtyard Colonnade

4300 Colonnade Pkwy, Birmingham
Free internet
\$99 • 205-967-4466

8 Marriott Courtyard Hoover

1824 Montgomery Hwy S, Hoover
Free internet
\$94 • 205-988-5000

9 Springhill Suites by Marriott Colonnade

3950 Colonnade Pkwy, Birmingham
Free breakfast and free Wi-Fi
\$99 • 205-969-8099

10 Days Inn Vestavia

1485 Montgomery Hwy, Vestavia
Free hot breakfast
\$49.99 king, \$55.99 double,
\$64.99 two queens
205-823-4300

11 Embassy Suites Hoover

2960 John Hawkins Pkwy, Hoover
Complimentary full breakfast buffet
& shuttle service, free internet &
parking, managers reception
\$139 • 205-985-9994

12 Microtel Inn & Suites

500 Jackson Dr, Hoover
Free breakfast & Wi-Fi
\$69.99 • 205-444-3033

For complete information about the convention, including an interactive hotel guide, please visit www.abscannualmeeting.org.



"**Together Ministry**" will help us take a look at the impact of youth ministry on our personal lives—family, spouse, friends, etc. This annual retreat is designed for full-time, part-time, bi-vocational and volunteer youth ministers/workers from Alabama Baptist churches and their spouses. Here's what you need to know—

- The retreat itself is **FREE!**
- Lodging for two nights and four meals is \$75 per couple or \$50 per individual
- Opening worship/fellowship time begins Sunday evening, October 5, at 8 p.m.
- Retreat concludes by noon Tuesday, October 7
- Childcare is not provided

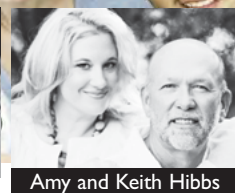
RETREAT LEADERS: Allen and Judi Jackson • Keith and Amy Hibbs • Ed and Sharon Cleveland

For additional information visit

www.onemissionstudents.org/togetherministry or please contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Adams at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 275, (334) 613-2275, dadams@alsbom.org. To register call Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, 1-800-280-1105.



Judi and Allen Jackson



Amy and Keith Hibbs



Ed and Sharon Cleveland

Fall Senior Adult Retreat

Monday through Wednesday, **October 13-15** Shocco Springs

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

Preacher: Herbert Brown, pastor, Southside Baptist Church, Greenville

Celebration Leader: Debbie Childers, The Reality Group, Austell, Ga.

Music Leader: Chris Weide, First Baptist Church, Opp

More than 200 senior adults gathered at Shocco Springs in April where they praised God and focused on ways to share their stories of God's mighty acts in their lives with their children, grandchildren and those whose lives cross paths with theirs. They joined in praise, worship and laughter. Maxine Bearden from Ozark Baptist Church was there. She said, "I always come away from Shocco Springs uplifted, feeling closer to God! I am always ready to return. I am never disappointed." Will you plan to come and bring a few good friends?

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

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



SENIOR ADULT Choir Celebrations

October 23: Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Montgomery • The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla

October 24: Providence Baptist Church, Opelika • First Baptist Church, Bay Minette

For more information and to register, go online to www.alsbom.org/senioradultchoircelebrations. For other information, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khiggs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

ALABAMA CHURCH PLANTER NETWORK DINNER

Speaker: Bob Logan

Schedule: dinner, 6 p.m.; worship led by church planting worship teams, 6:30 p.m.; message by Bob Logan, 6:45 p.m.; breakout sessions, 7:15 p.m., wives led by Marybeth Culbreth, pastor/planters led by Bob Logan; dismissal to pick up children in childcare, 8:30 p.m.

Who Should Attend? Church planters and wives and/or anyone interested in coaching are invited to this event.

About Bob Logan: No one has influenced church planting in America over the past two decades more than Bob Logan. The Basic Training we now use (Alabama Church Planting Basics) is based upon the Church Planter Toolkit developed by Logan. He is also currently very active in coaching planters, pastors and other

**SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 9,
2014** ≈ PETE HANNA
CENTER, SAMFORD
UNIVERSITY, 800
LAKESHORE DRIVE,
BIRMINGHAM

missionary personnel. He is the author of *Coaching 101* and numerous other books and publications.

Registration/Cost: Go online to www.alsbom.org/churchplanterdinner. There will be no cost for those who have completed either Basic Training or Churches Planting Churches Training. All other participants will be charged \$25 per couple or \$15 per individual. The deadline for registration is no later than noon on Wednesday, November 5.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

SAVE THE DATE

Shocco Springs
March 8-11, 2015

53RD Annual Conference

Alabama association of baptist secretaries

Pastors and ministry assistants begin now planning for this great conference. Remember to include this in your 2015 church budget.

Cost: \$261 (which includes three nights double occupancy room, eight meals and program fees). After January 21, 2015 the cost will be \$276.

Worship Leader:

Libby Stokes Woolwine

Conference Speaker:

Jodi Burbank

For conference updates, check online at

www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com

Student Missions Weekend

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

January 16-17, 2015 for students in grades 7-12 and their leaders

Cost: \$45 per person

Registration deadline: January 2

At Student Missions Weekend (SMW) you will:

- Hear personal stories from a young missionary who is answering God's call to serve Him here at home and abroad.
- Experience dynamic worship led by an awesome praise band.
- Dive deep into God's Word through Bible study.
- Take part in a missions/ministry project in one of the communities surrounding the Cook Springs area.

For more information, go online to www.alabamawmu.org/students, or contact Erin Bishop at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 224, or (334) 613-2224, ebishop@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission

RA WEEK HIKE 4 MISSIONS

Nov. 2-9, 2014



RA Week Ideas:

- RAs usher and receive the offering.
- RAs have a Recognition Ceremony.
- RA Camp Out.

• Conduct a "Hike 4 Missions" to raise money for the Lottie Moon Offering. Information is available at www.alsbom.org/ra.

• Have a Pastor's Table at the Wednesday night church supper. RAs are special guests of the pastor and staff. (This is like a Captain's Table on a ship.)

For more information about RA Week observances, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.

START RA BASKET BALL



- Join or start an association RA league.
- Follow the guidelines of RA Basketball, available online at www.alsbom.org/ra.
- Do mission projects as outlined in the "Alabama Royal Ambassador Advancement Workbook," also available at www.alsbom.org/ra.

Note: A team does not have to be in an RA league to play in the February state RA tournament. The team does have to be a Royal Ambassador group and must fulfill the advancement requirements as stated in the guidebook.

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



SOAPBOX DERBY

State Race:
Saturday, **October 18, 2014**

Location:
Dexter Avenue, in front of the Alabama State Capitol

Rules & information:
www.alsbom.org/ra

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

CONCLAVE

A training conference to equip and rejuvenate your youth ministry team.

JANUARY 29 - 31
CHATTANOOGA CONVENTION CENTER

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Also Featuring: Allen Jackson, Judi Jackson, Richard Ross, Brian Mills, Ken Coley, Scott Kindig



Conclave is jointly sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and five other state conventions

SENIOR ADULT SINGIN'

~ TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16:

First Baptist Church, 830 U.S.
Highway 43, Winfield

~ THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18:

Southside Baptist Church, 423
East Cottonwood Road, Dothan

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

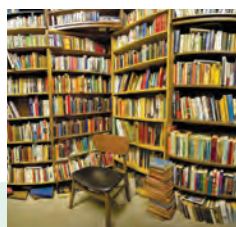
REGISTER ONLINE:

www.alsbom.org/senioradultsingin

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



NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE



Central Baptist Church,
2801 Highway 31 S., Decatur
November 1, 2014

COST: Free, including lunch

THIS IS THE 14TH ANNUAL TRAINING EVENT for north Alabama and others who wish to attend. Conferences will cover all areas of library work plus history, copyright, cardmaking and training in both Concourse and Atrium. Lunch will be provided at which time an author will be guest speaker. Registration will begin at 8 a.m. with general session beginning at 8:25 and the conclusion of conference at 3:30 p.m. There will be a book swap and lots of free items.

To register or for other information, please contact Eva Nell Hunter at (256) 353-5912, ext. 245 or (256) 303-7739 (cell); library@cbcdecatur.org or enhunter@charter.net.

Monday through Wednesday,
September 22-24, Shocco Springs

Church LIBRARY WORKSHOP

Theme: "Libraries: Reach, Teach
and Minister"

Registration/Prices: 1-800-280-1105

For other information, please contact State Missionary Mike Jackson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 210, or (334) 613-2210, mjackson@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, ddickey@alsbom.org.

FAITH-FOCUSED SECURITY TRAINING

LEVEL A TRAINING FOR 2014

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

- September 27 - Tallapoosa Association Office, Jackson's Gap
- October 4 - First Baptist Church, Russellville
- October 25 - Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan
- November 1 - Central Baptist Church, Mt. Olive
- November 22 - Eastwood Baptist Church, Monroeville
- December 6 - Millbrook Baptist Church, Millbrook

COST IS \$40 PER ATTENDEE (includes lunch and breaks). Reservations are non-refundable.

LEVEL B TRAINING FOR 2014

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

- December 4-6: Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

COST IS \$200 PER ATTENDEE (includes materials, Saturday lunch and breaks). Reservations are non-refundable.

REGISTER ONLINE www.alsbom.org/ffst

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

Changes and opportunities

IMB launching short-term missions pilot program to increase involvement on field, 'attack lostness'

To a rousing chorus of cheers and applause, International Mission Board (IMB) trustees overwhelmingly elected Alabama Baptist pastor David Platt (see story, page 1) as IMB's 12th president during their Aug. 26–27 meeting near Richmond, Va.

Also during the meeting, IMB leaders briefed trustees on a pilot funding program to allow for greater numbers of short-term missionaries (who serve two- to three-year terms) while forging deeper partnerships with churches.

Under the initiative, based on the model established in 1977 by the Southern Baptist Convention's Mission Service Corps, more than 50 percent of short-term missionaries' financial support will continue to be provided by Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The remainder, set at \$15,000 per person per year, will be raised by the missionaries themselves.

Jay Wolf, chair of the trustees' administration committee and pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, noted, "The objective is simple: We want to put more people on the field. We want to attack lostness, and right now we don't have the financial resources to do that. So we need to be creative and do more with less."

The IMB will provide short-term candidates and their churches the coaching and tools they need to raise this partial support, Wolf added. The pilot project will begin with candidates attending a March expo in 2015.

IMB trustees also heard about opportunities in Syria and Iraq. John Brady, IMB vice president of global strategy, described the growth of refugee camps in places such as Duhok, a city in Iraqi Kurdistan, and high-

lighted the need for relief for the region's estimated 9 million forcibly displaced people. He added that IMB's primary human needs partner, Baptist Global Response (BGR), is leading Southern Baptists' efforts to help these refugees. But, he said, the relief work is hampered by a lack of support.

'Chance to make a difference'

"Southern Baptists' hearts have not been moved," Brady lamented. "Only \$300,000 has been given to BGR for relief in Syria and Iraq. Christians, Yazidis and many others have been swept out of their villages and are clinging to life in these camps. And in every hovel, we have a chance to make a difference — not tomorrow, today."

Brady begged trustees to give to relief efforts at BGR's website, gobgr.org.

"There are local brothers and sisters that I personally know on the ground there who have chosen not to leave, and they just want to know that we're going to stand with them," Brady said. "One of my friends told me, 'Ask the Christians of the West, have they forgotten us?' I want to answer, 'No, we have not.'"

In other business, IMB trustees:

► Appointed 50 new missionaries including at least four Alabama Baptists.

► Remembered the life of IMB missionary Jeff Powers, who served for 16 years as a church planter in Botswana and Zambia with his wife Staci. Powers died July 10 after a year-long battle with cancer.

► Accepted and offered prayers of thanksgiving for four estate gifts totaling nearly \$785,000.

The next IMB trustee meeting will be Nov. 6–7 in Olive Branch, Miss., with a missionary appointment service Nov. 9 at First Baptist Church, Olive Branch. (BP)

Samford's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing receives Sight Savers school of the year award

Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing has received Sight Savers America's inaugural KidCheck Plus Nursing School of the Year Award.

KidCheck Plus is a school-based health screening program that provides head-to-toe screenings for preschool–12th grade students in rural and urban Alabama. Samford is one of the program's 20 nursing school partners in Alabama.

Nursing school dean Eleanor V. Howell, associate dean Joy Whatley and nursing faculty member and partnership manager Elaine Marshall accepted the award during the Aug. 26 presentation ceremony at Samford in Birmingham.

Dedication, service

Chad Nichols, CEO of Sight Savers America, said, "Under the leadership of Elaine Marshall, the school's faculty, staff and students embody the leadership, dedication and service that this award is all about."

Nichols noted the school of nursing was selected for this honor based on its superior communication and partnership with their program; faculty leadership that encourages a positive work effort and inspires a spirit of service; outstanding involvement with the program and a willingness to participate; and exceptional organization and dependability at their KidCheck Plus health screening events.

In 2013–14, Samford nursing students provided 1,832 health screenings at nine schools. A number of issues were identified, leading to nearly 700 referrals. Following each screening, reports were sent home to parents and provided to each school's nurse.

More than 20,000 children are screened through KidCheck Plus each year and about 50 percent have identifiable health needs. Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing has partnered with the program for two years and will continue its involvement in 2014–15. (Samford)

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Persons

Gifted by the Spirit

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

We often refer to someone as gifted. One might be thought of as a gifted pianist or a gifted athlete. With such terminology, we are most likely referring to a person who is unusually talented and who has worked hard to perfect some ability. When the New Testament refers to spiritual gifts the meaning is somewhat different from natural abilities. A person might be talented but not possess a spiritual gift. Such an observation rests on a basic truth about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are Spirit-given. This immediately tightens the circle of spiritual gifts to something possessed by believers who have been born of the Spirit. Non-Christians can be quite talented, but only Christians possess Spirit-given gifts. Human talents are related to physical birth, but spiritual gifts are related to our spiritual rebirth.

The wording of 1 Corinthians 12:4 is significant when declaring, "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit." The term used for "gifts" (*charismata*) is built on the Greek term for grace (*charis*). Thus the Bible describes spiritual gifts not only as Spirit-given but also as grace-given. Since spiritual gifts are bestowals of grace, no room is allowed for pride or boasting over a particular gift.

1 Corinthians 12:11

Divine sovereignty attaches to spiritual gifts. After listing a sampling of nine spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:11 explains, "All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportioned to each one individually as He wills." Since we do not choose among the variety of spiritual gifts, no place exists for pride over one's own gift or envy over another's gift.

God's purpose in bestowing spiritual gifts through His Spirit is for service in the body of Christ, the Church. Spirit-bestowed gifts are not for an individual's private use or personal enjoyment. Such gifts are for enabling Christ's body to function effectively and fruit-

fully. Such is the unmistakable force of 1 Corinthians 12:7, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." This being true, grace gifts come in a marvelous variety, such as enabling varieties of service through a healthy body. We have a common saying when people are clumsy, "They are all thumbs." If such were literally true, a person would be totally unable to play a piano. Such a person might be adept at hitching a ride but not at painting a masterpiece.

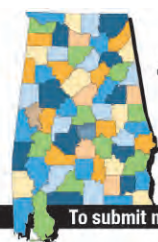
'Varieties of gifts'

As the body of Christ, the Church ideally has "varieties of gifts" by which to offer "varieties of service" and "varieties of activities," all empowered by God through the agency of His Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4–6). The reverse side of this truth is that all members of the Church do not possess the same gift, as declared in 1 Corinthians 12:14, "The body does not consist of one member but of many." The corollary of this is that every member of the body is uniquely important, being placed in the body by God and gifted by His Spirit.

Two practical truths flow from this, or at least should. First no one should belittle or minimize his or her spiritual gift. We cannot say that because we are not gifted in the same way as others we are unimportant to the body (1 Cor. 12:14–16). Second no one should discount or demean another's role in the Church, saying we really do not need that bodily part as if an eye said to a hand, "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). In the Church every member is grace-gifted in some way and is thereby important to the body. ☛

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.





Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BIRMINGHAM

► **Robinwood Church, Birmingham**, will host The Sharp's Quartet on Sept. 7, 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Dale Creel is pastor.

BULLOCK-CENTENNIAL

► **First Church, Union Springs**, will celebrate its 165th homecoming Sept. 7. Sunday School will start at 9:45 a.m. and the worship service, including children's choir, youth choir, worship choir and guest speaker Dale Huff, will start at 10:45 a.m. A covered dish lunch will follow. Bill Cannon is pastor.

ELMORE

► **Santuck Church, Wetumpka**, will host Celebrate Recovery's sixth anniversary celebration Sept. 11, 7 p.m. Ben Nobles will speak. B.R. Johnson is pastor.

MADISON

► The CISM class on Suicide Prevention and Intervention scheduled for September held by **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, has been rescheduled for March 6-7, 2015. For information call

256-420-8172. Mike Clark is pastor.

MOBILE

► **James Langston Jr.** is the new pastor of **Fulton Road Church, Mobile**. He holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a bachelor of business administration from The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He previously served as director of church health for Bledsoe Association, Gallatin, Tenn.; pastor of Cragfont Church, Gallatin, Tenn.; and pastor of Roosevelt Memorial Church, Pine Mountain Valley, Ga. He and his wife, Ronie, have two children.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Columbiana**, will host a health workshop "Caring For Your Community" on Sept. 11, 9-11:30 a.m. The event is open to the public and will feature health screenings and physician consultations. Mike Miller is pastor. ► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 14. The service will start at 10:30 a.m. and will feature the Cook 4 singers.

A covered dish lunch will follow. Ken Phillips is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **James Sampley** is the new minister of missions and senior adults for **CrossPoint Church, Trussville**. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Ashville. He and his wife, Judy, have two children and two grandchildren. Ryan Whitley is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **First Church, Dadeville**, will host an Operation Christmas Child (OCC) countdown event, "The Power of a Simple Gift," Sept. 18, 6:30 p.m. Free OCC resources will be available. For information call 256-307-1723. Gary Wiggins is pastor.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Mount Pleasant Church, Woodville**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 14, 11 a.m. Ricky Rush will be the guest speaker. Mount Pleasant also will host a revival Sept. 15-17, 7 nightly. Speakers include Wyatt Jones, Dillon Frazier and Phillip Snell. Joe Beddingfield is pastor. ☞

Praying Alabama set as time for pastors to gather, pray for Alabama, nation

Spiritual awakening. Revival. Spirit-filled churches. These and others may be phrases you toss around as you lead a congregation, but what can you do as a pastor to see such things happen in your church, state and nation?

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) has set Sept. 15-16 as Praying Alabama, a time for pas-

tors to gather at Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, to pray for revival together.

The event will begin Monday at 6 p.m. and conclude Tuesday at noon.

Speakers will include Rick Lance, executive director of the SBOM; Tim Cox,

pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea; Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile; David

Cofield, pastor of CrossRoads Baptist Church, Rogersville; Don Graham of Don Graham Revival Ministries in Athens; Craig Carlisle, pastor of 12th Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City; Chris Crain, pastor of North Valley Church, Odenville; Mike Jackson, director of the office of leadership and church health of the SBOM; and Ronnie Floyd (via video), pastor of Cross Church in Northwest Arkansas and president of the Southern Baptist Convention. (TAB)

To register for the event, visit www.alsbom.org/upcoming-events/praying-alabama.

Boomer grandparents spent \$2.43 billion

(MetLife report)

on primary and secondary school tuition and supplies! That's a 3-fold increase since 2000!



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Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

BWA adds 4 church networks in Africa, North America

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) now numbers 231 member organizations in 121 countries following the recent addition of four church networks in Africa and North America.

The Chin Baptist Churches USA becomes the 19th Baptist convention in the United States to join the global organization. Formed in 2004, the group has 8,500 members in 63 churches with a Burmese heritage.

In Africa, two Baptist groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have joined the BWA, bringing the number of BWA members to 13 in that country. The Baptist Community of the Faithful in Africa was established in 1958 and has 30,146 members in 136 churches. The Baptist Evangelical Community in Central Africa was formed in 2009 and comprises 40,000 members in 150 churches.

Ethiopia now has three BWA affiliates with the addition of the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Ethiopia, which has 20,000 members in 49 churches. It was established in 1962.

BWA raises funds to help Ebola outbreak in West Africa

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — As the Ebola outbreak in West Africa continues, the Baptist World Alliance is urgently appealing for donations to help assist those displaced by the virus, to provide food for those affected, to distribute educational materials for prevention of the spread of Ebola and more.

According to the World Health Organization, there were 2,615 suspected cases of Ebola by Aug. 20, with 1,427 deaths in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The current Ebola outbreak first began in Guinea in March.

For more information or to donate, visit bwanet.org. ☞

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ELIZABETH BERG
University of Montevallo
graduate student

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3 Circles



NAMB produces evangelism tool to help share gospel

As Alabama pastor Derek Staples prepared for a July missions trip to Honduras, he was on the lookout for a visual way to express the gospel in a pre-literate environment. The church missions team would be setting up a medical clinic at a local school and sharing the gospel to those who came for help. He also had nearly 40 opportunities to preach during a three-day period.

“At the (June) Southern Baptist Convention during the North American Mission Board (NAMB) presentation, I

watched Pastor Jimmy Scroggins share the 3 Circles,” said Staples, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

“Most of the people in Honduras can’t read or write. I thought it was an incredible visual representation of the gospel.”

During his time in Honduras, Staples preached 37 times using the 3 Circles as an outline and saw 593 people trust in Jesus as their Savior. He now plans to train members of his congregation how to use the tool to share their faith back home in Alabama.

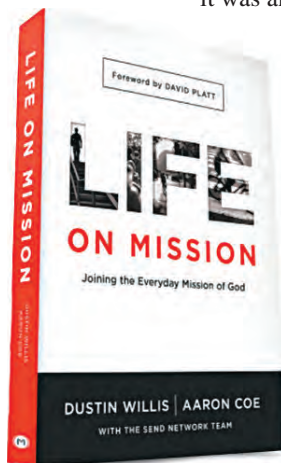
“I’m always trying to give my people as many tools as possible to help them

effectively share the gospel,” Staples said. “This is a memorable, easy way to explain how anyone can have a personal relationship with Christ.”

Personal evangelism

Staples is among a growing list of Southern Baptists using NAMB’s 3 Circles evangelism tool to share the gospel through personal evangelism and preaching, and to train others in its use. Scroggins, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla., developed it to train and mobilize his congregation for personal evangelism in a post-Christian environment.

The tool helps people witness using three circles that represent God’s design, brokenness and the gospel — which can easily be drawn on readily accessible materials, such as a napkin during lunch. NAMB has produced a variety of resources to help support pastors who want to train their churches to use the tool, including free Apple and android apps, a conversation guide, a PowerPoint presentation and online videos. The 3 Circles tool is part of a larger set of resources NAMB is releasing around the “Life On Mission” theme — centered on mobilizing all believers for the mission of God. (NAMB)



**For more information, visit
lifeonmissionbook.com.**

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

FHA has recently changed the principal limit factor and regulations regarding spouses of homeowners that are less than 62 years of age. The first change means that you’ll receive more money if you’re older. Young seniors (62 to 64) won’t see much benefit, but those who are older will. The highest amount will change by 13.1%. That’s \$13,100 more for every \$100,000. This will certainly help some, especially those of you who are wanting to pay off a large mortgage.



Jimmy Dixon

Until now, if one homeowner was 62 and their spouse was younger, the younger was not allowed to stay in the house if the older spouse passed away (unless they paid off the debt on the home). Now, however, they

may live in the home as long as they want.

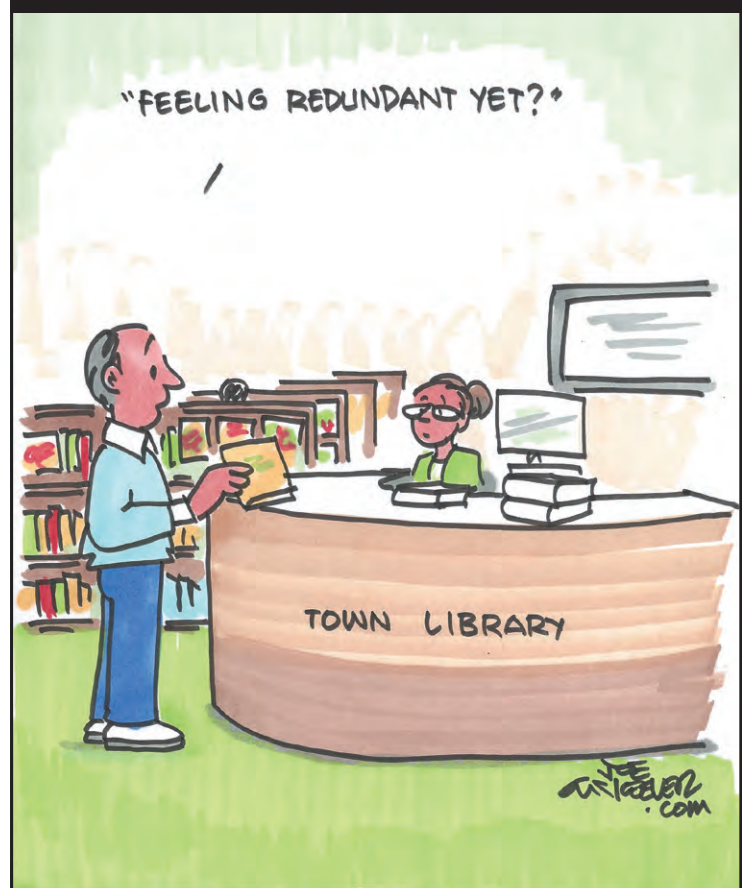
If you remember my last article, I made mention that FHA may start requiring us to check credit scores and income, but so far so good. We are not required to yet, and it may be a good while before we do, if ever. They were definitely discussing the issue and we even had lenders preparing documents for that purpose.

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure, quote or DVD, contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com. Contact him today.



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REFLECTIONS



CAMPUS News

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Speech Students Pull from History for Live Monologue Performances:** Judson College speech students performed live monologues on Helen Keller, Zelda Fitzgerald, Tallulah Bankhead and others from the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame during a speech class taught by professor George Frangoulis over the summer.

The hall of fame was established at Judson in 1970. To date, more than 80 distinguished women of Alabama are members. Only women who have been deceased for two years or longer can be considered.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Golf Classic Set for Sept. 19 in Point Clear:** The 17th annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Classic golf

tournament will be held Sept. 19 at Lakewood Golf Club in Point Clear.

Register for the UMobile Classic by calling the development office at 251-442-2917 or online at www.umobile.edu/mobileclassic.

► **UMobile Students Travel to Austria for 10 Days of Service:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) School of Christian Ministries sent a team of students and faculty to Austria this summer, marking the 52nd nation where UMobile has conducted international service projects.

Doug Wilson, dean of the School of Christian Ministries, and Kimberly Wilson, adjunct instructor, led the team of six students and one alumna as they assisted in services and special events at the Evangelical Free Church of Kufstein, Austria.

The UMobile team assisted the church with several community projects and outreach programs. The team also participated in community literature distribution, a community outreach pancake

supper, worship leadership and Jumpstart, an outreach worship gathering in nearby Oberaudorf, Germany.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Beeson's Lay Academy of Theology Offers Evening, Afternoon Studies:** Registration is open for study opportunities offered this fall by the Lay Academy of Theology at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. The noncredit evening courses and afternoon seminars are designed to interest laity as well as ministers.

Evening courses meet one night a week, 6-8 p.m., for six weeks. The topics and dates are:

Reading with the Dead: A History of Biblical Interpretation, an exploration of ancient and modern biblical interpreters. Begins Sept. 29.

Outposts of Hope: First Peter's Christ for Culture Strategy, a look at the meaning of First Peter for

today's disciples. Begins Sept. 30.

From Medieval Church to Reformation, an introduction to the fascinating and complex history of the Church. Begins Oct. 2.

Two weekday seminars will meet in the afternoons. The topics and dates are:

Moses' Last Words, a study of Moses' sermons and how they affect Christians' spiritual trek today. Begins Sept. 30.

An Introduction to the History of Christian Theology, a unique approach to a holistic understanding of the development of theology. Meets daily Jan. 26-30, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

For online registration, visit www.beesondivinity.com/layacademy or call 800-888-8266, ext. 2731.

The academy also sponsors the popular Boot Camp for Christian Writers series taught by authors Denise George and Carolyn Tomlin. Upcoming programs will be held Oct. 11 and Oct. 13. For information, visit www.beesondivinity.com/bootcampforchristianwriters or call 205-726-2731. ☞

Want to know GOD?

Pastor JD Thorne
Point Mallard Parkway Baptist
Church, Decatur

Growing up I had a basketball goal in my driveway. I had two friends who would come to my house and we'd play against each other. Alex would go on to be one of the best basketball players at my high school, eventually playing college ball. He could dunk, shoot better and was faster than me. It was only on rare occasions that I would pull out a victory.

Chase also would come and play, but he was nowhere near as good as Alex. He was shorter than me, slower than me and had the vertical jump of an ant.

So what if someone asked me, "Are you good at basketball?" What would my reply be? Well that depends on who I'm comparing myself to. Compared to Alex, I'm not very good. Compared to short, stumpy Chase I looked like an all-star.

This is the problem we all face when we ask ourselves the question, "Am I a good person?" It's easy to find people (usually just by flipping on the TV) that I am more moral than. It's easy to think that, compared to them, God must really be pleased with me. But we are not compared to the holiness of other people. The standard by which we are judged is the perfect holiness of God. By that standard, we all fall short.

Even the most moral person in the world fails to live up to the standard of holiness that God requires of us. So what are we to do? We need a substitute. Someone who could be perfect for us and offer us that perfection freely. That's what Jesus came to do. He lived the life that you and I could never live; a life of sinless perfection. He died the death that we deserved to die; a death for sin. He rose from death, proving He was God and that He's alive today.

Jesus gladly takes our place at the cross so we can stand before our Heavenly Father in perfect holiness. Not based on our works but on the works of Jesus in our place. He graciously offers this free gift of salvation to you today. Will you surrender your life to Him? ☞

MARKET PLACE

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A CLASSIFIED AD, CALL THE ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST, 205-870-4720, EXT. 102, OR EMAIL ADS@THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG. COPY DEADLINE IS TWO WEEKS BEFORE PUBLICATION.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Dwight Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumes to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 520 North 29th Street, Gadsden, AL 35904, or email a resume to: dwightbaptistchurch@comcast.net.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Send resumes to: Concord Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 5951 Warrior River Road, Bessemer, AL 35023. Email: concordbaptist@bham.rr.com.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Send resumes to: Stowers Hill Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 407 Ninth Ave. SW, Attalla, AL 35954. Email: stowershillbaptist@gmail.com. Deadline for resumes is Sept. 14.

PASTOR: Opportunity for a traditional, middle-aged, Southern Baptist pastor to serve God in a mid-size church in the Florida panhandle. Potential for church growth in an expanding community. Church and community profile available upon request. Send personal profile to: Chairman, Pastor Search Committee, Box 10675, Panama City, FL 32404.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Shady Grove Baptist Church is currently seeking a bivocational pastor. Located about 10 miles from Selma and 35 miles from Prattville in Dallas County. We are a Southern Baptist congregation. Average worship attendance is 40. Please send resume to: michelle.adams@ipaper.com or Michelle Adams, 242 Co. Rd. 939, Selma, AL 36703. Contact number: 334-874-3905.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., is currently seeking resumes for the position of minister of music (part-time). Services include blend of contemporary and traditional music. Email your

resume to: steve.potts@wbclive.com or call 205-798-3341.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: Wilmer Baptist Church is searching for a Spirit-led, experienced individual to fill a part-time worship leader position. This individual will be responsible to lead choir, contemporary worship service and work with instrumentalists. For more details, visit www.wilmerchurch.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Eldridge Baptist Church in Eldridge, Ala., is seeking a worship leader to lead our choir and congregation in a traditional/contemporary worship service. Respond to: eldridgebaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS & COLLEGE: First Baptist Church of Piedmont, Ala., is accepting resumes for full-time position of minister of students and college. Please email resumes to: sandra5131950@yahoo.com.

MINISTER OF YOUTH: First Baptist Church of Blakely, Ga., is currently receiving resumes for the position of minister of youth full time. Please send resumes to: kalderman@fbcblakely.com.

BIVOCATIONAL STUDENT MINISTER: South Hamilton Baptist Church is currently seeking resumes for bivocational student minister. Please email resumes to: southhamilton@gmail.com with Student Minister as the subject or mail to: South Hamilton Baptist Church, ATTN: Student Minister Search Committee, 1805 Military Street S, Hamilton, AL 35570.

PASTOR TO CHILDREN: First Baptist Church of Maryville, Tenn., located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, is looking for God's man or woman to join our staff as full-time pastor to children. For a full job posting, go to www.fbcmaryville.org. Re-

sumes may be sent to: childrenspastor@fbcmaryville.org or mailed to: FBC Maryville, 202 W. Lamar Alexander Parkway, Maryville, TN 37801.

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ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/BOOKKEEPER: Birmingham, over the mountain dealership needing an administrative assistant with bookkeeping skills. An automotive background is necessary. Full-time, 9-5. Please call 205-876-6332.

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STEEPLES, ETC.: No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for Terry Barnes, owner. Visit gallery at www.SteepleEtc.com.

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

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PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Evangelical Christians fight for religious freedom

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia — Evangelical Christians have begun their battle against new measures that could result in the dissolution of Protestant denominations and other groups that have ministered in Bolivia for decades.

As organizations that fail to comply with the new government measures will lose their legal standing, the National Association of Evangelicals of Bolivia (ANDEB) presented a petition of unconstitutionality July 30 to the country's constitutional tribunal seeking their repeal.

"This law is totally unconstitutional, incongruent with religious liberty as enshrined in Article 4 of the constitution," said Cochabamba attorney Ruth Montañó, who helped frame ANDEB's petition of unconstitutionality.

Law 351, passed by the Bolivian legislative assembly in March 2013, aims to "regulate the granting and registration of legal standing to churches, religious groups and spiritual beliefs whose goals do not involve profit." Setting guidelines for implementation of Law 351, Supreme Decree 1987 stipulates that any religious organization in the country — Jewish and Muslim communities as well as Protestant churches — must reapply for legal standing within the next year.

Decree 1987 imposes a list of burdensome preconditions upon religious organizations that contradict the language of Article 4.

Failure to produce the required paperwork or flaws in the reports as determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will result in the cancellation of the organization's legal standing. This in turn would lead to confiscation of church properties, dissolution of worship services and closure of training centers, Montañó said.

Somali Christian in Kenya beaten, thrown off balcony

NAIROBI, Kenya — A Christian of Somali ancestry is still in pain as he recovers from a Muslim extremist attack that left him in a coma for five days.

Five Somali immigrant Muslims threw Mohammed Ali, a 30-year-old convert from Islam, from a fourth-story apartment building Aug. 15 in Nairobi's Eastleigh area, according to a friend. Ali, who lives in another area and is receiving treatment at Kenyatta National Hospital, was helping the friend to move.

Ali and the friend were waiting at the apartment in Eastleigh for a vehicle to transport household items in the move.

At 9 p.m., 4 hours after the truck was supposed to arrive, they heard a knock on the door. Ali's friend, whose name is undisclosed for security reasons, went to open it thinking the driver of the transport vehicle had arrived. As he opened the door one of five men told him, "We are looking for Mohammed."

Ali's friend told them it was late and they should come back to see him early in the morning, but they pushed their way in, pulled Ali out of the room and threw him over a balcony.

A doctor at the hospital said Ali's bladder was injured. A deep wound to his stomach appeared to indicate he had been slashed with a knife.

Laws passed in India to crack down on Christians

NEW DELHI, India — Christian minorities in central India face a new threat as Hindu extremists in more than a dozen village councils have passed resolutions imposing restrictions on religions other than Hinduism.

The laws, passed under the guise of stopping false conversions, made Christian prayer, services and "propaganda" illegal, World Watch Monitor reported. The Bastar district president of the World Hindu Council, Suresh Yadav, told *The Times of India* that more than 50 village councils have banned all non-Hindu missionaries.

The state government of Chhattisgarh has not intervened to strike down the rules but plans to monitor developments, according to the *Times*. Chhattisgarh Christian Forum president Arun Pannalal told the newspaper that village councils were wrong to think they could pass resolutions that override constitutional protections.

Church leaders said the resolutions have already harmed Christians and called for higher government officials to overturn and revoke them. ❧



Photo courtesy of the Pugh family

(L to r) Lynn, James, Ella and KJ Pugh are preparing to move 'across the pond' to serve at Grace Church in the community of Boroughbridge.

'Yorkshire bound'

Tuscaloosa minister following God's call to UK

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

KJ Pugh and his wife, Lynn, have been drawn to England for years, but it wasn't until the couple visited the United Kingdom (UK) in 2011 to celebrate their seventh wedding anniversary that they began feeling called to serve there. While on their vacation, Lynn told KJ she felt God's call for their lives right there in England.

"I told her, 'Maybe that will happen in our golden years,' but she said that wouldn't be soon enough," KJ recalled. "Over the course of the next two years, one thing led to another and the door opened for us to go to North Yorkshire."

KJ currently serves as associate pastor of education and missions for Open Door Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa (where his father, Keith Pugh, is pastor), but he has felt called to overseas missions for much of his life.

Now the Pugh family — KJ, Lynn, their daughter (Ella, age 8) and son (James, age 4) — is preparing to move "across the pond" to serve at Grace Church in the community of Boroughbridge. The church was planted in 2012 and is the only evangelical church within 150 miles and currently has 25 members (10 adults and 15 children).

The current pastor of Grace Church, Del de la Hoyde, has felt a calling to move to France to minister to people there. The hope is that KJ will come to the church and work alongside de la Hoyde for a year and then KJ will transition into the pastor role.

De la Hoyde said, "In December of last year, we began to look and pray for someone who would be able not only to replace me as leader but also to

take the work further and see churches planted all across the beautiful, needy county of North Yorkshire.

"On the very day that I was sending out emails to all the UK pastors I knew asking for their help and prayer in this, an email came in to our office from a certain KJ Pugh inquiring as to whether there were any openings for church-planting within The Crowded House network at the time, and particularly

in North Yorkshire. Encouraged by God's providence and by the tone and content of KJ's (resumé), we got in touch, and it's been a joy to see the Lord at work in this ever since."

KJ said he and his family cannot wait to make the move and officially begin work with Grace Church. He knows there will be cultural roadblocks to overcome but said he already feels such a

connection with the tight-knit congregation.

"I already feel like we're lifelong friends with Del and his family, and we feel loved by the other church members too," KJ said. "Grace Church has a big emphasis on close community and life-on-life missions (relational missions). It's entirely the culture of the church that made us feel so close right away."

Financial decisions

Before the Pughs can officially move to England, they have to sell their home, sell most of their belongings and complete the visa process. KJ hopes they will have all those tasks completed by September or October.

"It's going to be huge to sell everything and start over, and it's not the best financial decision, but Jesus is worth [it]," he said. "It's going to be a big deal to start again once we get there." ❧

To learn more about the Pughs' upcoming missions journey and how you can be a part of their experience, visit www.yorkshirebound.com.



TOP 10

downloaded songs from iTunes

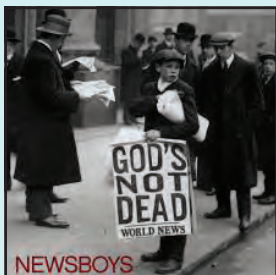
CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



1. Greater
By MercyMe
(Welcome to the New)



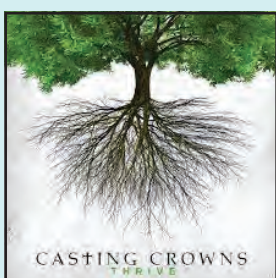
2. Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)
By Hillsong United
(Zion Deluxe Edition)



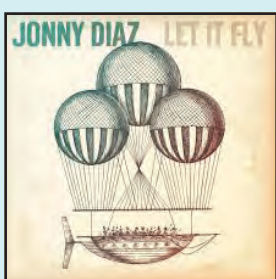
3. God's Not Dead (Like a Lion)
By Newsboys
(God's Not Dead)



4. Fix My Eyes
By for KING & COUNTRY
(Run Wild. Live Free. Love Strong.)



5. Thrive
By Casting Crowns
(Thrive)



6. Thank God I Got Her
By Jonny Diaz
(Let It Fly)

7. Hope in Front of Me
By Danny Gokey
(Hope in Front of Me)

8. We Believe
By Newsboys
(Restart Deluxe Edition)

9. He Knows My Name
By Francesca Battistelli
(If We're Honest)

10. Start a Fire
By Unspoken
(Unspoken)

Source: iTunes at press time



Photo courtesy of Word Label Group

'Throw away your mistakes'

Dara Maclean sings about freedom, forgiveness

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Through her music and message, singer/songwriter Dara Maclean desires to help audiences find freedom, forgiveness and fulfillment in Christ. With her hit song "Suitcases," Maclean encourages people to release the heavy burdens they have been carrying and surrender those issues over to the Lord.

The song was inspired by her own personal journey and spiritual growth.

"My parents were teaching a class at church and I had just finished leading worship," Maclean recalled. "I was doodling in my journal and my dad randomly said, 'You can't run when you're holding suitcases.' That really struck me. The chorus came together and it was a picture of me attempting to walk through life with these huge, bursting bags."

"One bag flies open and a baby blanket falls out. It's a metaphor of fears, rejection, hurts and insecurities. A picture of an ex-boyfriend falls out and I'm thinking, 'just let go.' The point of baggage is to weigh me down and actually stop me from walking in the fullness of what God has in store. I hope this song encourages people to collectively set those bags aside and discover there's so much more offered through Christ."

Strong calling

At a young age Maclean dedicated her life to the Lord and felt a strong calling to use her musical gifts for ministry.

"I grew up doing music and ministry in church — singing, writing, dancing and acting — anything and everything that revolved around a platform,"

Maclean said. "From a very young age I really felt called to perform. At 7 years old, I remember running into my dad's office and singing a song that I had written about the walls of Jericho falling down. It probably wasn't a very good song but my parents have always been so supportive and encouraging."

"I started leading worship when I was a teenager and began understanding not just the genre of worship, but worship as a lifestyle. I started leading worship for my youth group when I was 13 and kept leading until I was about 22 years old. That really set the tone for what I do today as an artist. I'm a worshipper — that's where the music comes from and the purpose of it."

While traveling and performing across the country, Maclean enjoys meeting people and hearing stories about how the Lord is working in their lives. Her concerts also help raise awareness and financial support in the battle against human trafficking.

"I want people to experience and encounter the love of God," Maclean said. "I believe that the real love of God as described in 1 Corinthians 13 has the power to change a person from the inside out. I want people to walk away knowing and realizing that there is something more as a child of God. There is life more abundantly. In Ephesians 3:20, it talks about exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond what we can ask or think. Have we even scratched the surface of that? Maybe not, but together let's discover what is available through Christ."

"The purpose of music is to reach people and it has nothing to do with me. I always want to keep my motives in check — asking God for clean hands, a pure heart; seeing people how He sees them and sharing His love." ❧

"The purpose of music is to reach people and it has nothing to do with me."

Dara Maclean
singer/songwriter



Mike Zunino

Photo by Tim Casey

Inspired by FAITH

Seattle Mariners catcher Zunino focuses on faith

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

During the 2011 Southeastern Conference (SEC) tournament, University of Florida catcher Mike Zunino got tripped up with a Georgia batter during the first inning as he attempted to throw out a runner stealing second.

As he was falling forward he threw the ball. It hit Florida pitcher Brian Johnson, who was kneeling with his back to the plate, in the back of the head. It knocked Johnson unconscious.

Johnson suffered a "mild concussion" and had to be taken off the field on a stretcher.

"To trip over a batter and hit your own teammate is not something to be proud of," said Zunino, remembering the anguishing moment.

However, he has had plenty of moments to be proud of. Zunino spent less than a season and a half in the Mariners' minor league organization before making his major league debut as catcher for the Seattle Mariners June 12, 2013.

Drafted third overall in the 2012 Major League Baseball (MLB) Draft, Zunino was the highest drafted player in University of Florida history and its only catcher to be named an All-American. He led the Gators to three consecutive appearances in the College World Series from 2010 to 2012.

Selected an All-American twice, he was the SEC Player of the Year in 2011. He was Baseball America's College Player of the Year in 2012 and won the Johnny Bench Award, Dick Howser Award and Golden Spikes Award.

Being picked third was "an honor. There was a lot of great talent. To know the hard work paid off was really rewarding," he said.

Achieving his goal of playing in the big leagues came through confidence inspired by faith.

"I always have to stay confident. You have to

find your strong point. When times are going good or when times are getting tough, you know that everything else is going to turn out all right," he said.

His relationship with Jesus "means a lot" he said.

"It's obviously something that I never take for granted. I am thankful for everything I am given every day. I have always kept a relationship there. I try not to shy away from it at any time."

He does that through prayer and Scripture reading.

He also has visited hospitals and does as much charity work as time allows.

Zunino has come a long way in baseball since playing for Mariner High School in Cape Coral, Fla., where he was all-state. He was drafted in 2009 by the Oakland Athletics as 873rd overall in the 30th round.

Growing up around the game

He grew up around baseball. His father Greg Zunino played professionally. He called his father his role model. "Growing up with my dad and being around the game got me started."

Both his father and mother, Paola Accorsi Zunino, taught him to have fun and give his best effort each time.

"I am a competitor and love to win. It comes natural to me. My inspiration is to be the best I can be. I want to put forth a good effort every day," he said.

In Seattle, Zunino had a .204 batting average through 81 games. He had 58 hits, including 14 home runs, scored 35 runs and had 36 RBI.

As he continues his MLB career he wants to stay even-keeled. "You never get your head too big or too low. I just try to hope for my well-being and happiness throughout my family and my friends. I have been extremely blessed that nothing severe has happened to me or anybody I am related to."

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



Polygamy law found unconstitutional in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — A federal judge finalized the order striking part of Utah's bigamy law Aug. 28 and gave one more victory to the family from the TLC TV show "Sister Wives."

The long legal battle over polygamy in Utah now appears headed to the appeals courts. Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes said he would appeal the federal court ruling that found the law against polygamy was unconstitutional.

"Sister Wives" chronicles the lives of Kody, Meri, Janelle, Christine and Robyn Brown and their children. Utah County authorities began their investigation of the polygamous family after their show debuted.

Jonathan Turley, the attorney for the Brown family, encouraged Reyes to reconsider his plan to appeal.

In December 2013, Federal Judge Clark Waddoups struck the section of Utah's bigamy statute that can be applied when someone "cohabits with another person" to whom they are not legally married. Utah law made such a union a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. Waddoups said the ban violated the First and 14th amendments to the Constitution.

Waddoups let stand the portion of the statute that prevents someone from having more than one active marriage license.

In his ruling Waddoups found the Utah County Attorney Jeff Buhman violated the Browns' constitutional rights when he oversaw a 2010 investigation into whether the Brown family was committing bigamy. At the time the Browns lived in Utah. They have since moved to Nevada.

Buhman eventually decided not to file criminal charges, but Waddoups said the investigation stifled the Browns' rights to free speech, religion and equal protection.

In court filings and oral arguments before Waddoups, attorneys for Utah have argued polygamy is inherently harmful to women and children and the state had an interest in deterring it.

The Browns filed their lawsuit in July 2011, arguing Utah's law violated their right to privacy. The family's argument relied primarily on the 2003 United States Supreme Court decision that struck down the Texas law banning sodomy.

Religious persecution hot spots to get their own US envoy

WASHINGTON — As the Islamic State has torn across Iraq and Syria, sending religious minorities fleeing for their lives, Congress created a new job at the State Department — one the president needs to fill immediately say those who pushed for the position.

The job: "Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia."

Those regions "are the hot burning center" of the global problem of religious persecution, said Katrina Lantos Swett, who heads the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, which Congress created in 1998 to monitor the issue independent of the State Department.

Advocates for global religious freedom have lobbied for the position for years and some say it is possible that the White House will combine the envoy's duties with those of the larger portfolio of the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

The White House declined to comment Aug. 20 on that possibility. In July, President Barack Obama nominated Rabbi David Saperstein for the ambassador-at-large job; his nomination is pending before the Senate.

Lantos Swett said that while it seems as if Congress intended the ambassador-at-large and the special envoy to be two separate positions, Saperstein could handle both responsibilities. "A lot of people feel he would do an excellent job if this was rolled into his portfolio," she said.

But Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., a lead sponsor of the bill for the special envoy, said the two jobs call for two people.

"There needs to be a person solely focused on the Middle East," said Wolf spokesman Dan Scandling. "What is happening there demands the total — and focused — attention of a special envoy. The ambassador-at-large has the world. The special envoy would focus entirely on the Middle East."

He added that while the ambassador must go through a Senate confirmation process, the envoy could be appointed and start serving far faster. ☞