

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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Photo by Karim Shamsi-Basha

(L to r) National WMU Foundation's Candice Lee and David George; Olu Q. Menjay, president of Liberian Baptist Association; and Eddie Gibson, Birmingham-area missions pastor and native Liberian, collect the first food items donated to the food drive at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Emergency assistance

Alabama Baptists partner to help Ebola victims in Liberia

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Hunger issues in West Africa because of the Ebola virus outbreak have moved from a serious concern to absolutely critical, said native Liberian Eddie Gibson, missions pastor of Sardis Missionary Baptist Church, Birmingham.

More than 4,200 cases of Ebola have been reported in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone and more than 2,200 people have died, according to the World Health Organization.

Schools have closed down, businesses are operating with skeleton

crews, communities have been quarantined and farming activities have been halted. Food sources are scarce and prices of what does exist have skyrocketed out of reach.

"The afflicted and affected of this disease need our immediate assistance," said Gibson, who is

working with LIBA (Liberians in Birmingham, Alabama, Inc.) and national Woman's Missionary Union Foundation to gather and ship food supplies on a 40-foot ocean container to Liberia by the end of September.

"Your participation is critical." ❧

Food/funding needed to feed hungry in Liberia

Birmingham-area food drive drop-off sites
(see page 3 for list of needs)

Sept. 20
Mountain Brook Baptist Church
3631 Montevallo Road South
Birmingham, AL 35213

Sept. 27
Sixth Avenue Baptist Church
1101 MLK Jr Drive
Birmingham, AL 35211

Statewide effort to help fund shipping of the food

Make tax-deductible check to:
WMU Foundation HEART Fund, 100 Missionary Ridge, Birmingham, AL 35242

Give online at www.wmufoundation.com

U.S. News ranks Samford, UMobile among nation's best

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Once again claiming a top spot in the 2015 Best Colleges rankings released Sept. 9 by *U.S. News & World Report*, Samford University in Birmingham was named third in the South.

This is the second year in a row *U.S. News* has ranked Samford third in the "Regional Universities South" category.

"While this ranking is only one indicator of Samford's progress, I am pleased with the news," Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said. "Many people in the Samford community contribute to this success, but we also continue to strongly believe that our best measures of progress are in the accomplishments of our students, faculty and alumni."

Improved rankings

In addition, Samford also received high marks in other categories related to the 2015 rankings. The university ranked third in the South for "A Strong Commitment to Teaching," up one spot from their No. 4 ranking last year in that category. It also ranked No. 12 in the South in the "Great Schools at Great Prices" category.

The University of Mobile (UMobile) also earned high scores in the *U.S. News* rankings — it ranked No. 25 in the "Regional Colleges South" category and No. 9 in "Best Regional Colleges in the South for Veterans."

This is the fourth consecutive year UMobile's rankings have risen in the annual survey.

UMobile President Mark Foley attributed the positive trend to a university-wide focus on assessing and improving the total educational experience, from academics to campus life.

"We are seeing the results of staying focused on our 10-year strategic plan," he said. The strategic plan, 2020 Vision, is aimed at propelling UMobile to "be a nationally recognized (See 'Other,' page 10)

COMMENT

Worship Is More Than a Private Experience

Don't get me wrong. Private worship times are vital to a growing relationship with the Lord. In Psalm 1:2 the writer describes a blessed person as one who "meditates" on the Word of God day and night. Psalm 119:11 explains the reason one does this is to "hide God's Word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Both verses extol a value of private devotional times for Christians.

Jesus emphasized the value of private worship during the famous Sermon on the Mount. There He urged listeners not to make a show of their personal devotion to God but to "go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret" (Matt. 6:6).

Private worship is important. It is an indispensable part of a vibrant, growing Christian life.

Unfortunately some people seem to think private worship where one is alone with God is the only worship experience a believer needs. This idea is reflected in such statements as "I don't need the church. I worship God by myself." Sometimes that misconception even penetrates corporate worship experiences when believers are urged to ignore everything and everyone around them and be alone with God.

Pagan worship

In pagan worship people still go to their temples as individuals. They take their offerings to get the attention of the gods. At temples and shrines in many parts of the world one sees worshipers oblivious to those around them because their worship is all about the individual.

New Testament believers chose a different path for Christian worship. The Book of Acts and the letters of Paul are filled with references to public worship activities. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). At Antioch, Barnabas and Saul "for a whole year assembled with the church and taught a great many people" (Acts 11:26). In 1 Corinthians 14:23 the apostle Paul wrote about the whole church coming together in one place.

Early Christians adopted the method of the synagogue instead of the pagan temple. Meeting houses became places where individuals were built up in their personal faith and where the corporate body of Christ was nurtured.

Both elements are important. Christianity requires a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. At the same time, believers are incorporated into a larger Body of Christ (the church) that is greater than any single individual. Christian worship is supposed to reflect both aspects. One is to be in relationship with God and in relationship with fellow be-



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

lievers at the same time. After all, that is what God purposed at creation.

Corporate worship benefits the individual, to be sure. The most obvious way is through expanded knowledge and increased understanding. Preaching and teaching were essential parts of early church gatherings and they still are today. In Baptist churches this usually takes the form of the sermon but it can happen in other ways such as Bible studies, personal sharing, hymn singing and observing the sacraments.

Corporate worship helps renew one's joy in the Lord. The Christian faith is built on the love of God expressed in the atoning death of Jesus for the sins of the world and on God raising Him to new life through the resurrection from the dead. Every time one hears that story joy is refreshed. Every time one witnesses an individual embracing the atoning death of Christ as their personal hope of salvation, personal joy and hope are renewed in a way not possible in private worship.

Personal holiness

A result of worship, whether corporate or private, is to be increased personal holiness — being conformed to the image of our Savior Jesus Christ. Corporate worship provides the opportunity for accountability in the journey toward holiness that private worship cannot. Being accountable to fellow believers for one's actions and attitudes is far different than being accountable only to one's self.

Participation in corporate worship also builds up the Body of Christ. When one participates in worship one is identifying with the church. One is connecting to the teachings proclaimed by the Christian faith. One is joining the corporate witness of the Body of Christ to a world

that does not acknowledge God as Savior and Lord. The witness of the whole Body of Christ becomes more than the sum of the witness of its individual parts.

Corporate worship encourages the disheartened. Every week in practically every congregation believers bring their grief, pain, disappointment and confusion to the Lord. Life has a way of attacking all who live very long on this earth. But amid fellow believers, hurts are healed and hope is renewed. In part, this is through commitment to a risen Lord who makes believers "more than conquerors" in this life. In part it is through the testimony and support of fellow believers who have traveled similar journeys and found the Lord "a very present help in times of trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

As one who has traveled the road of grief and loss I know it is difficult to overestimate the value of ministry from fellow believers who demonstrate the abiding love of God that will not let us go.

Those who share corporate worship develop bonds of love that are difficult to break. They have grown together in their understanding of God, have shared the refreshing presence of the Spirit of God, have helped one another in the journey of Christian discipleship and have been strength for one another in times of trouble. Such experiences make people more than acquaintances and more than

friends. They become family — brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Perhaps that is one reason many observers say churches are at their best in times of crisis, for that is when bonds of love fortified by years of nurture and care can really be seen.

Corporate worship also opens doors of service. The writer of Ecclesiastes expresses this idea in chapter 4 when he writes that "two are better than one" and that "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Believers working together can provide more Christian service than can be offered by a single believer. When Christians cooperate together in the service of the Lord, the whole Body of Christ benefits.

Again private worship is important but Christian worship is more than a Lone Ranger-type experience. True Christian worship includes participating in the body of Christ through regular corporate worship.

This week make it a point to participate in corporate worship. 🙏

"Private worship is important but Christian worship is more than a Lone Ranger-type experience. True Christian worship includes participating in the body of Christ through regular corporate worship."



"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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Called to care

Alabama native serves as nurse on Ebola treatment team

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When emergency department nurse Jessica Loomis learned two Christian missionaries sickened by the Ebola virus would be brought to Atlanta's Emory University Hospital for treatment, she began praying.

She didn't just pray for the missionaries, however. Loomis prayed she would have an opportunity to work on the team treating Dr. Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol, medical missionaries who were sickened while serving in West Africa. This is an area of the world Loomis knows well from stories told by her grandparents, Don and Gwen Reece, retired Southern Baptist representatives who served in Nigeria from 1959 to 1992.

The first team chosen to work with Brantly and Writebol were Intensive Care Unit nurses. A few days later Loomis joined the team of 21 nurses and five physicians who were caring for the missionaries. Brantly and Writebol spent three weeks in a special isolation unit at the hospital before being released from care Aug. 21 and 19, respectively.

Loomis said Writebol told stories of her work in Liberia, stories reminiscent of those Loomis grew up hearing from her grandparents.

"What a blessing it has been to connect with missionaries from West Africa because they are so close to my heart," Loomis said.

The recent outbreak of the Ebola virus has killed more than 2,200 people in West Africa.

Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have been the countries hit the hardest. The virus is spread through direct contact with blood or bodily fluids, but Loomis and her fellow Emory health-care workers took great precautions, wearing face masks and protective body suits to guard themselves as they cared for Brantly and Writebol.

Despite the dangers of Ebola, Loomis said she was never anxious about working with the patients. Instead Loomis calls the experience "joyful in the midst of a season of trials for both the patients and their families."

One incident that especially stood out to Loomis happened one day as she was deliver-



Photo courtesy of Jessica Loomis

Jessica Loomis (far left) was among Emory Hospital staff who met Matt Lauer of the 'Today Show.' Lauer visited the hospital while taping a special on Dr. Kent Brantly for 'Dateline NBC.'

ing breakfast to Writebol. Writebol's son, Jeremy, had brought the meal for his mom and was waiting outside the room to talk to her by telephone. Loomis went into Writebol's room to deliver the food but as she set the food down, a cup of water spilled. Writebol immediately began to help Loomis clean up the spill.

'I could feel the love'

"In that moment I had tears in my eyes because I could feel the love she had for the nurses and staff that had been helping her. Instead of spending that moment talking to her son, this kind, humble woman spent a few moments helping me clean up water," Loomis said.

Loomis, 25, and a native of Decatur, worked at Jackson Hospital in Montgomery before moving to Atlanta in 2013. One of the best parts of working with the Ebola patients was the opportunity to spend more time with them, she said, which doesn't happen with patients who come through the emergency room.

In the end the entire experience made Loomis

feel even more connected to the people and missionaries in West Africa. Though she does not serve abroad, Loomis said her mission as a nurse is to care for people and to help meet their physical, spiritual and emotional needs. That mission was instilled in her from an early age and is part of the missions legacy of Alabama Baptists that runs deep in her family, she said. Not only is she the grandchild of missionaries, but her father-in-law, Keith Loomis, is an associate in the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Jessica Loomis met her husband, Kyle, when they were both students in Baptist Campus Ministries at Auburn University. Her grandfather, Don, remains active in Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief as well.

"My grandparents and parents instilled in me a love for people and a compassion for those in need," she said. "My grandparents have told me stories my entire life of caring for those who were extremely ill or didn't know the love of Christ." ❏

Food items needed

for Liberia



- ▶ **Rice** — white/parboiled long grains (10- to 50-lb bags/boxes) — 1,000 bags/boxes
- ▶ **Beans** — Dry beans such as pinto, black-eyed peas, kidney, lima (10- to 50-lb bags) — 2,000 bags
- ▶ **Flour** — Self-rising or all-purpose (25-lb bags) — 800 bags
- ▶ **Canned meat** — Salmon, fish, chicken, Spam, etc. — 5,000 cans
- ▶ **Powdered milk** — Dry — 700 boxes
- ▶ **Sugar** — granulated — 500 bags

(Any amount donated toward the goal is appreciated. See page 1 for drop-off sites.)



BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Alabama college students share summer missions experiences

By Amy Jackson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

What do the World Cup, a rural health clinic in the Philippines, a café in Southeast Asia and a port city in France have in common? These are four of the locations where Alabama students ministered this summer.

One Mission students — college students from Alabama serving through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) — served in 20 countries and eight states. Many of the places they served have direct connections to their home state.

One Alabama connection came in the port city of Marseille, France.

Steadman Bethea, a student at Samford University in Birmingham, served in Marseille with Journeyman Goodson McLemore, a Samford graduate. Bethea and McLemore have a special link — both are members of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and knew each other growing up.

Bethea worked with McLemore on Project Northern Lights, which exists to reach Muslims traveling between France and North Africa via the port city of Marseille.

Four to six ferries travel between the two countries daily. Bethea helped coordinate and lead teams of students serving the project for five weeks. The teams passed out packets of information to the travelers boarding and exiting the ferries. The packets included children's books, the Jesus Film and a copy of the New Testament. During the course of the summer the teams passed out more than 4,000 packets, which went straight into the hands of Muslims and ultimately into North Africa.

Depending on the Holy Spirit

Bethea said the trip taught him so much about his faith and about leadership. "I learned how to lead the right way and how to lead by example. [I also] learned how to rely on the Holy Spirit. Every day, I didn't know what I would do — but I knew I couldn't do anything without the Holy Spirit working in me, being the hands and feet of Christ."

The trip also taught him a lot about praying and trusting in God to work in the lives of those they encountered.

"We were trying to get [the packets] across the sea and into North Africa and depending on the Holy Spirit to work through those packets," he said.

Several Alabama students also served with

Nehemiah Teams, a ministry organization for students ages 17–29 that provides eight-week summer missions opportunities in cross-cultural ministry among unreached people groups.

Jess and Wendy Jennings, Alabama Baptists serving as Southern Baptist representatives, founded Nehemiah Teams in 2004.

Since its creation Nehemiah Teams has sent more than 1,600 students to work with more than 60 unreached people groups in 20 different countries. Nehemiah Teams partners with the International Mission Board (IMB), state Baptist conventions, local churches and other missions organizations.

One student partnering with Nehemiah Teams this summer was Amanda Gaster, a senior at the University of Mobile. She served on a team providing health care in a rural village in the Philippines.

Gaster, a nursing major, was especially interested in serving on a medical missions team so she could use her studies in the missions field. Much of their service focused on providing basic health care — teaching about proper diet, taking blood pressure and performing circumcisions for infants — to open a door to share the gospel.

They also spent time building relationships with native Filipinos in the rural village. The team led Bible studies, taught English and shared Bible stories in the local school and also connected local believers and church members with those interested in learning more about the gospel.

"The biggest takeaway from all of that is that I found so much joy in being able to go house to house and share the gospel and build relationships because there is so much joy in that, and because that's what we are here to do anyway," she said. "That is our purpose. I do not ever want to choose my own comfort over taking up my cross. This summer really opened up my eyes to that."

Gaster also described the program provided by Nehemiah Teams as being especially helpful for both preparing students to serve on missions overseas and also to serve back home in the states after their time overseas.

Each group of students sent out by Nehemiah Teams read the book of Acts over the



Photo courtesy of Amanda Gaster

Amanda Gaster (left), a senior nursing major at the University of Mobile, serves on a medical missions team in a rural village in the Philippines.

"Here's a chance to do something that will make a difference, to give hope to people who are dying without hope."

Amanda Gaster
University of Mobile student

summer and studied missions articles and missionary biographies. That specific strategy helped educate the student volunteers about the need among unreached people groups, the history of missionary work and the call for believers to go and make disciples. All of the groups also received training in Rainsville before leaving for their assignments.

Adrien Coffey, a student at the University of North Alabama, also served with Nehemiah Teams. An elementary education and special education major from Moulton, she helped students learn English in Southeast Asia for eight weeks.

"The best part of my summer was getting to share [the gospel] with a girl who had never heard

about Jesus, and just watching her facial expressions," she said. "[The students] were talking about how [the gospel] seemed like a fairy tale, and she said it was what she had been searching for."

Other connections were made through the Alabama Acts 1:8 Connection, a strategy developed by the SBOM. It strives to bring together Alabama churches and other groups such as Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) together with North American Mission Board and IMB workers who have ties to Alabama.

The team of college students serving at the World Cup in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was one such group. The 13-person group, led by Auburn University-Montgomery campus

minister Lee Dymond, spent two weeks serving at the World Cup with Southern Baptist representatives Eric and Ramona Reese. Their areas of focus included medical outreach, ministry to soccer clubs, outreach to World Cup attendees and service to the homeless. They also spent time serving in an impoverished area in downtown Rio de Janeiro, an area commonly known as "crack land" by locals, rechristened "Christo Landia" ("Christ Land") by Southern Baptists.

Greg Idell, Southern Baptist representative in Santiago, Chile, said, "In my 31 years of university ministry, I've not seen better teams than the Alabama State BCM teams I have worked with the past two years."

Same basic problem

Dymond wrote in a blog post, "I've been in dangerous situations without a hint of fear because I knew God had sent me there. I have seen so much brokenness that my heart still hurts. However, I am reminded that we have the same brokenness back home; we just know how to hide it better. We all have the same basic problem: we are sinners who need to be redeemed by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for His glory alone."

Though students' experiences were different, the thread woven throughout is the chief joy of knowing God and making Him known.

Gaster said, "Our generation is so passionate about causes and wants to do something that matters, something that will last.

"Here's a chance to do something that will make a difference, to give hope to people who are dying without hope. That's what I want to spend my life doing," she said. "I'm passionate about it and I want all peoples to have a chance to know Jesus." ❧



MINISTRIES

continue to make an impact across the state

NAMB missionary shares how summer missions influenced him

By Brad Simmons
North American Mission Board missionary

I grew up at Hatton Baptist Church near Leighton. I went to church with my family multiple times a week from birth until I moved to go to college. God saved me when I was a child but my most significant spiritual development happened at Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH).

I began attending Celebration, the weekly worship gathering at BCM, my first week of school. Though I wasn't going there for the holiest of reasons — in all honesty I went to meet girls — God had other plans in mind. It was there that I first met other guys my age who were committed to growing in their relationships with Christ.

It was there that I was first challenged to really understand why I believed what I believed. It was there that I was encouraged to consider what my faith meant for the way I was going to live my life.

Gifts and talents

Through my involvement in BCM I served as a summer missionary with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) for three summers. I spent my first summer in California working at various Vacation Bible Schools (VBS), kids' camps and event ministries. My second and third summers I served in Kansas at a youth camp with a team of other college students.

During each of these summers I learned some things about how God

had gifted me and equipped me for service to Him. I learned there is such a thing as too much VBS and discovered I would not make a good youth leader. However, in spite of my deficiencies, I learned God could use me in the lives of people in other ways I had never considered.

During my junior year of college the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions promoted opportunities for college students to go to the northeastern United States to serve for two years on college campuses and start campus ministries on campuses with no evangelical presence. A video promoting those opportunities was shown at my weekly BCM worship service and I immediately knew this was what God was preparing me to do.

During the next few weeks

I received confirmation of this from other students without my mentioning to them my interest.

Two years later after graduating from UAH I moved to Wichita, Kan., for a two-year position with NAMB to start a BCM at Wichita State University. Since then I have planted a church for international students at Wichita State and am now a career missionary with NAMB serving as a church-planting catalyst.

Each step along the way God has used the experiences and the people whose paths I have crossed to move me along in my journey of serving Him. I am thankful for the investment people made in me and the gifts of others who made their investment possible. ❏



SIMMONS

“Each step along the way God has used the experiences and the people whose paths I have crossed to move me along in my journey of serving Him.”

Brad Simmons
North American Mission Board missionary



Photo courtesy of Drew Adams

Drew Adams (left), Austin Rowell (second from right) and their translator, Abel (right), share with one of the religious leaders on an island west of the mainland Philippines.

BCM students minister to Filipino people

By Drew Adams
BCM student

This summer I went on mission to a remote island west of the mainland Philippines. For security purposes we named it “little island.” I took part in this mission through Nehemiah Teams, a ministry founded by Jess and Wendy Jennings that partners with the International Mission Board (IMB). Our team consisted of five Americans and two native translators. Our team members were my little brother Colby, Austin Rowell, Bryant Sparks and Hagen Bray. Our task was to evangelize this unreached island and to survey several other islands in July for future IMB teams.

The story behind our assignment on this island is inspirational. Our Filipino supervisor shared the gospel with a man on a ferry two years ago. She shared for about 10 minutes, and they both went their separate ways.

However, she had written her phone number on the tract she had given him in case he had a question in the future. Several weeks later she got two phone calls from a woman and her son who happened to be that man's wife and son. They said he had shared the story with them, and they wanted her to come to their island and teach them more about it. Our supervisor accepted the invitation, and when she went to the island she saw the dire need for the gospel as the only people on the island with any religious background were a few Catholic women.

She called Jess Jennings and explained the situation, and he quickly organized a Nehemiah Team who would serve on this island during the summer of 2014. We gladly joined. We had one mission in mind as we traveled

to “little island” this summer — make disciples. We did not want to simply share the gospel with 800 people and leave the island with no one to teach them. We organized our day into two sessions — door-to-door evangelism in the mornings and Bible studies with committed believers in the evenings. We were able to pour into followers each evening and watch them grow in their love for God and His Word. Our biggest highlight of the summer came in late July when close to 20 teenagers and

young adults placed their faith in Christ and repented of their sins. We had Bible study with them every night, sang worship songs and had Q-and-A sessions where they could ask us any biblical questions they had. By the end of the summer 11 of these followers obediently took part in baptism. On our last night we were able to participate in a Bible study they conducted. They are now teaching and sharing the gospel with unbelievers on that island and discipling new believers.

I took two major things away from this trip. First never underestimate the power of sharing the gospel with one random person. Our supervisor did not know if anything would come of her obedience in sharing with that man but God convicted his heart, saved his family and began a revival on that island. Second never underestimate the power of teenagers and young adults when they are saved by Christ and eager to follow Him.

This summer was hard. This summer was challenging. However, this summer we were able to take the gospel to an unreached people group and watch people take hold of it and follow Christ. As Jess Jennings repeatedly told us, “No matter how hard it gets, Christ is worth it.” ❏



ADAMS



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.

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **First Church, Luverne**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary and homecoming Sept. 28, 10:30 a.m. Rick Lance will be the guest speaker. There will be music and a video tribute to honor members who have passed on. Lunch will follow. Donnie Burns is pastor.

AUTAUGA

► **Liberty Church, Deatsville**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary homecoming Sept. 21. Joey Bentley is pastor.

BESSEMER

► James and Brenda Tubbs have been serving for the past six years as North American Mission Board (NAMB) Prayer Mobilizers for the Alabama State Board of Missions under the direction of Reggie Quimby and Mike Jackson. Effective Sept. 16, they will begin a new assignment with **Bessemer Association** as NAMB — Mission Support Specialists serving under the direction of Director of Missions Barry Cospier.

BIRMINGHAM

► **McElwain Church, Birmingham**, will host Birmingham Association's annual event "The Gathering" on Oct. 5, 5 p.m. The theme is "Establishing and Strengthening Relationships." Davan Watkins, pastor of First Church, Pleasant Grove, will speak. Joe Estes, minister of music and worship for First Church, Trussville, will lead in worship. Children will enjoy a special worship service that will run simultaneously with the adult worship service. There will be inflatables, games, popcorn, cotton candy and lemonade. This is a free family event for the whole community. Fred Johns is interim pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its regular third Sunday night singing Sept. 21, 6 p.m. featuring Twice Born. For information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Faith Chapel Church, Marion**, will host a revival led by Mark Stokes. The services will be Sept. 21, 6 p.m. and Sept. 22–24, 7 p.m. Food and fellowship will follow the Sept. 21 service. Lloyd Stockman is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Brooks Memorial Church, Atmore**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 28. Sunday School for all ages will be at 9:30 a.m. and morning worship will be at 10:30 a.m. Doug Woods will be the guest worship leader. Lunch will be at

noon. HeartLine will sing in the afternoon. Everyone is invited. Robert Heard is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► **Vredenburgh Church** will celebrate homecoming Sept. 28. Pastor Thomas Anderson will speak at 11 a.m. Lunch will be served immediately following the service. There will be special music and memories shared.

RUSSELL

► **John Hatcher** is the new pastor of **North Phenix Church, Phenix City**. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Georgia in Athens and a master's of divinity and doctorate in ministry from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He previously served as pastor of Mount Lebanon Church, Cotton-ton. He also has served as pastor of Lakewood Church, Phenix City.

SHELBY

► **Chase N. McLain** is the new associate pastor of **Riverchase Church, Birmingham**.

He holds a bachelor of arts in Bible and theology from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham and a master's of divinity from Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham with a projected graduation of December 2014. He and his wife, Alyxis, have two children. Also **Lynn Gannett-Malick** is the new children's minister for the church. She holds a bachelor of arts in Bible and theology from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham; a



MCLAIN



GANNETT-MALICK

master of arts in guidance and counseling from the University of Alabama at Birmingham; a master of arts in Christian ministries from Wheaton Graduate School in Wheaton, Ill.; a master of arts in human resource management from Ohio State University in Columbus; and a doctorate in education from the University of Memphis in Memphis, Tenn. She has been chair of the department of education and associate professor at Southeastern Bible College since 2006. She previously served for nine years on church staffs as di-

rector of Christian education. She served at Tabernacle Church of Norfolk in Virginia and at Chelton Church, Dresher, Penn. She is married to Dave.

SIPSEY

► A Community Tent Revival will be held Sept. 28, 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. and Sept. 29, 7 p.m. The tent will be set up on US 43 approximately 6 miles north of the traffic light at Northside Middle School and is sponsored by **Arbor Springs Church, Northport**; **New Hope Church, Berry**; and **Sulphur Springs Freewill Church**. Bob Pitman will speak and there will be special singing at each service.

ST. CLAIR

► **Jay Stewart** is the new pastor of **First Church, Ashville**. He holds a bachelor of arts in music from Jacksonville State University, a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary, and a doctorate of ministry from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Ga. He previously served as pastor of Dwight Church, Gadsden. He also has served at White Springs Church, Gadsden, and Calvary Church, Gadsden. He and his wife, Candace, have two children.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Ridgedale Church, Scottsboro**, which recently celebrated 66 years of ministry, held its closing service Sept. 7 with a former pastor, Sammy Gilbreath, preaching. The facilities will be used for a new church plant currently being organized in Scottsboro. Jeff Mann, former director of missions for Tennessee River Association, will serve as pastor. The opening date is projected in October. Dwight Everett is director of missions. ► **Trinity Church, Scottsboro**, will host Frank Jones Ministries in a worship concert Sept. 28, 10:30 a.m. Duaine Griggs is pastor.

WINSTON

► **Meek Church, Arley**, will hold revival Sept. 21–24. Dinner will be at 5:15 nightly and revival will be at 6 p.m. Larry Hyche will speak Sunday morning; Scotty Hogan will speak Sunday night; Dusty McLemore will speak Monday night; Kevin Hamm will speak Tuesday night; and Tim Anderson will speak Wednesday night. Paige Givens will sing and lead worship Sunday, and Adam Rogers will lead worship Monday–Wednesday. Christy and Abbey Plott will lead first–sixth grade in worship each night in the children's room. A nursery will be provided for babies through kindergarten. Thomas Hyche is pastor. ☪

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Elam's Underwood honored for 50 years of ministry

Elam Baptist Church, Ariton, recently honored its bivocational pastor of 11 years, Joe Underwood, for 50 years of ministry.

Underwood, 77, said he felt the call to preach at Kyle Avenue Baptist Church, Gadsden, as a young man.

He graduated from Emma Sansom High School in Gadsden, earned a pastoral training certificate in 1968 from the Baptist Bible Institute of Florida in Graceville, Fla. (now the Baptist College of Florida) and received a bachelor of arts degree from Mobile College (now The University of Mobile) in 1970.

He previously served as pastor of churches in Georgia as well as Rocky Head Baptist Church, Ariton; Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Ozark; Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ozark; and Roeton Baptist Church, Brundidge.

Underwood has served on several Baptist committees during his ministry and also served two years as vice moderator for Dale Baptist Association.

While serving as pastor of Elam Baptist, Underwood said it was laid on his heart several years ago to contact area churches around Elam about working together and hosting a tent revival.

"We did that for seven years," he noted, adding the effort turned into what is now known as the Elamville Ministerial Association. "Now we have officers (and) bylaws," he said of the group.

In addition to his pastoral role at Elam, Underwood continues to work part-time at a Sherwin Williams store where he has been for 32 years. He noted he has been able to pastor and "do what I did in small churches" because of his job.

Elam held a reception June 22 to celebrate Underwood's 50 years in ministry. He noted with appreciation that people from every church where he served as pastor attended the event.

He and his wife of 57 years, Lanelle, have two children and three grandchildren. (Julie Payne)

Florence native writes 1 Corinthians commentary

Former Alabama Baptist Mark Taylor invested seven years of his time and knowledge into writing "The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, 1 Corinthians."

Taylor, associate dean of master's programs at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was asked to write this interpretive resource by the editorial team for the New American Commentary series, to whom he is "very grateful."

But what sets this commentary apart from others for 1 Corinthians? Most distinctively, the length of the book.

Taylor's commentary is 473 pages with thorough footnotes, whereas many recent commentaries on the same subject are closer to 1,000 pages.

"I wrote for the teaching pastor," Taylor said. "My hope is that this commentary will be an especially useful resource and reference tool for the teaching pastor and serious Bible student."

Although he seeks to help Christians understand 1 Corinthians, Taylor does not want the commentary to be a substitute for reading the Bible.

"I would always encourage anyone engaged in the study of 1 Corinthians to read the letter first on its own terms and then consult commentaries," he said.

From the age of 3 until he left for college, Taylor attended Highland Baptist Church, Florence, in Colbert Lauderdale Baptist Association. Taylor said the ministries of Highland Baptist "laid the foundation" for his future calling.

Part of that future calling was this commentary, which Taylor views as an educational ministry opportunity.

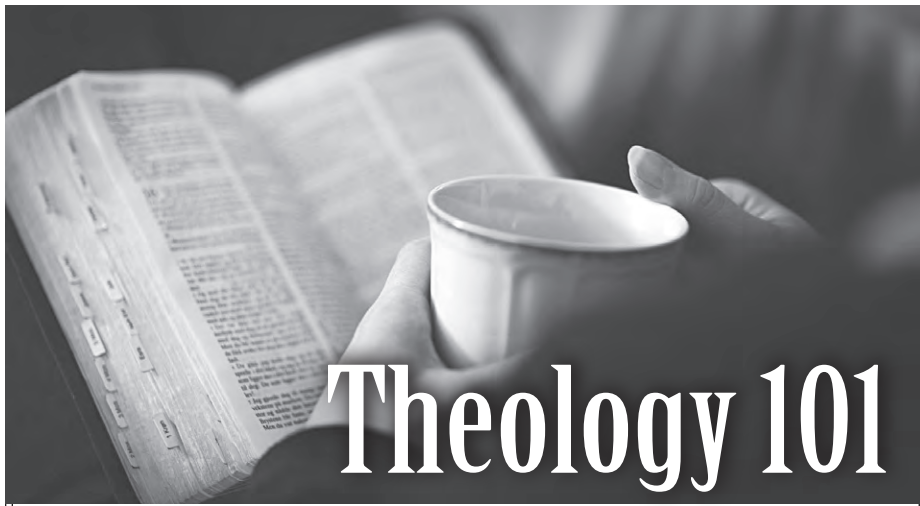
"If I have made any contribution that helps someone to understand and apply this portion of God's Word to his or her life, or that assists in the teaching or preaching of the letter, then I am very pleased with this outcome," he said. (Maggie Walsh)



UNDERWOOD



TAYLOR



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Living

Walking Worthily (Part 2 of 2)

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

The first half of Ephesians 4 continues to speak to us about maintaining a worthy Christian walk. Last week we saw that one aspect of living worthy of our Christian calling is the cultivation of Christlike attitudes, such as humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and love. Moving beyond the idea of personal Christlike qualities like these, a worthy walk is one that is committed to conserving congregational harmony. Ephesians 4:3 urges us to be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Embedded in this aspect of a worthy walk is the recognition that the Holy Spirit seeks to unify a diverse body of believers into peaceful congregational life. The idea is that we are to bend every effort to maintain what the Spirit creates. To do less is unworthy.

Underlying congregational unity are seven theological truths about our life together in the church. The first three truths declare, “There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call” (Eph. 4:4). Congregational harmony thrives on the recognition that the Church is one body — the body of Christ. The New Testament does not speak of multiple bodies, such as a Jewish body, a Samaritan body or a Gentile body. We should not think of the Church in segmented terms. The unifying power for a congregation is found in the one Spirit — the Holy Spirit who indwells each member of the one body. Furthermore the one body shares a common hope — anticipating being gathered together in the great heavenly throng composed of people from every nation, tribe and tongue. Our life together here and now must be the dress rehearsal for life together there and then.

Faith in one Lord

The next three theological underpinnings for church harmony are “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). In spite of all the individual differences found in a congregation, we have in common the one Lord — Jesus. Each of us has confessed faith — faith in the one Lord. As we look around the mem-

bership, we hold in mind that we have all come to the same Lord in the same way. Furthermore we have confessed our common faith in the one Lord the same way — we publically declared our commitment to Him by submitting to Christian baptism.

The seventh underlying truth about congregational unity is the reality of the “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:6). The combined impact of these seven truths declares that anything that destroys harmony in the Church is unworthy of our Christian calling.

Church growth

In addition to the worthiness of Christlike attitudes and congregational harmony, a worthy walk is one that is committed to church growth. After setting forth Christ’s grace gifts of gifted leaders for the Church (Eph. 4:7–11), the purpose in view is that of “building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). The following verses in Ephesians 4:12–16 suggest areas in which worthy Christian living seeks to contribute to church growth.

Churches can grow in practical ministries (v. 12), in spiritual maturity (v. 13), in doctrinal stability (v. 14), in functioning cooperation (v. 16a) and in mutual love (v. 16b). Not every church may experience dramatic statistical growth in membership and finances, but members walking worthily of our Christian calling can help our church to grow in these other important areas. Not to do so is quite unworthy of the name we bear and the calling we have received. 🙏

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.



Providing HOPE

WMU Foundation’s Hayes Endowment offers grants to aid victims of human trafficking

The national Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) Foundation recently made \$3,500 in grants to The WellHouse in Birmingham and Turlac Ministries in Moldova, two organizations that fight human trafficking and aid trafficking victims. The grants were made from the WMU Foundation’s Hayes Endowment, which was established by David and Judi Hayes to specifically address the needs of trafficking victims.

“Of all trafficking activities in the United States, 40 percent of it happens in the Southeast,” said Alexa Likis-James, development director at The WellHouse. “We provide rescue, shelter, help with getting identification, medical assistance and more. We basically get victims back on the map.”

Oleg Turlac, founder of Turlac Ministries and graduate of Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, identifies economic issues as a major factor in Moldova’s human trafficking crisis.

“Women are promised a good job, and they sign a contract in a foreign language,” Turlac shared. “Traffickers take advantage of our economic situation.”

The grant from the WMU Foundation helped The WellHouse provide trauma counseling, medical assistance and housing to trafficking victims.

“We receive no federal funding and we never charge our ladies for these services,” said Tajuan McCarty, a survivor of human trafficking and founder of The WellHouse. “Foundation grants are imperative to our sustainability.”

Turlac used the WMU Foundation grant to purchase sewing machines to help Moldovan women learn a skill that will provide an income.

“The sewing ministry gives women an opportunity to earn an income, offering an alternative to prostitution,” Turlac said. Turlac Ministries also provides rescue and counseling to trafficking victims, as well as programs aimed at preventing trafficking.

The Hayeses, of Mount Juliet, Tenn., began the Hayes Endowment to combat human trafficking after Judi learned about the

issue through Project HELP: Human Exploitation, an initiative of national WMU. When the Hayeses realized that more than 29 million people are currently being trafficked they felt compelled

to do something to provide a Christian response to trafficked victims.

According to David George, president of the WMU Foundation, the Hayes Endowment specifically helps Christians in their efforts to rescue victims and offer short-term and long-term counseling, housing and rehabilitation in the name of Christ.

Christian response

Turlac strongly supports a Christian response to trafficking victims. “The victims are discouraged,” he said. “Many think there’s no escape, but we’ve seen many situations where people have shown compassion. There is a way out. Christ is the only answer because, otherwise, this is too much of a burden for a woman to bear.”

In addition to the Hayes Endowment, the WMU Foundation supports many Christian missions and ministry efforts. (WMU)

To learn more about the WMU Foundation, visit wmufoundation.com.



Photo courtesy of the WMU Foundation

The national Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) Foundation recently made \$3,500 in grants to The WellHouse in Birmingham and Turlac Ministries in Moldova. Pictured are (l to r) David and Judi Hayes, who established the Hayes Endowment; David George, WMU Foundation president; Tajuan McCarthy, founder of The WellHouse; Alexa Likis-James, development director of The WellHouse; Debby Akerman, national WMU president; and Oleg Turlac, founder of Turlac Ministries.

Determined to stay

Palestinian Baptist church forced out of its building in East Jerusalem

Seven years of harassment and attacks by hard-line Muslims have finally forced a Palestinian church in East Jerusalem out of its building.

The members of Calvary Baptist Church, under Holy Land Missions, moved out of their building in the Shofat area of Jerusalem, Israel, in July after Islamists threatened their landlord.

Pastor Steven Khoury said he was emotionally torn when he handed over the keys. The persecution was difficult but also had been a catalyst for spiritual development, he said.

Immediate persecution

"It was very emotional because a lot of our people really started to grow there," he said. "Most of the growth happened in Shofat because of the persecution."

The persecution started almost immediately after the congregation moved into the building in a predominantly Muslim area in 2007.

Within 10 days of starting meetings and worship services, a Muslim who lived close to the church building attacked a member with a knife. Then someone tried to set the building on fire, likely with a

Molotov cocktail, Khoury said.

Next came the vandalism — first cars parked at the church building were damaged, then the property and finally came physical attacks on children coming to church gatherings.

"These were all spread out over a two- or three-year period, to let us know that we were not welcome there," Khoury said.

When the local government accepted a request in late 2008 to put up a road sign identifying the location of the church building, things "really escalated," he explained.

"When we did that it took everything to the next level. The landlords were now being threatened. The landlords were being told, 'How dare you do this, this is a disgrace to Islam. If you don't do anything about this, we will.'"

Eventually the landlord succumbed to the pressure and the 110-member congregation had to leave the building.

This has happened to the church twice before.

In 2006, Holy Land Missions had to leave a building in the Beit Hanina area of East Jerusalem, which is a Muslim-majority area like Shofat. When the group rented the building in 2004 church vehicles were vandalized, a sign identifying the church was torn

Baptist leader urges Christians to stay in Middle East

A Lebanese Baptist leader says the West should be helping Christians stay in the Middle East, not offering them visas to escape.

Nabil Costa, executive director of the missions organization Lebanese Society for Education & Social Development, opposes recent initiatives by European and Western governments to offer visas for Christians fleeing violence by Islamic militants in Syria and Iraq.

"We want the Christians in the West to lobby for us to live here in peace," Costa said.

The government of Aus-

tralia recently approved 4,400 humanitarian visas to resettle people fleeing violence in the two countries.

Long-term refugees

Costa said short-term humanitarian relief to those fleeing violence in Iraq is to be commended, but he fears that unless Christians return to their homes they will become long-term refugees similar to the exodus of Palestinian Christians from the Holy Land.

"In the long run we need to help Iraqis stay in Iraq," Costa said. "The Iraqis that left Mosul need to go back to Mosul. Chris-

tians that are leaving Syria need to go back to Syria. You need to help them go back to their countries."

Reuters reported Aug. 29 that 3 million Syrian refugees have registered in neighboring countries and nearly half of 6.5 million Syrians have been displaced by the advance of Islamic State forces.

Recently the Syrian conflict has spilled over into Lebanon.

"You do not help us as the West when you give us visas to emigrate," Costa said. "We don't want to emigrate. We want your power to help us to stay here." (ABP)

down twice and the building was subjected to repeated vandalism and break-ins, Khoury said.

Church administrator Hany Khayo said persecution has been constant.

Especially disheartening to the congregation was the response they received from clergy of "traditional" Christian denominations such as the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox.

"Some of those [pressures] in the community were from traditional Christians, believe it or not," Khayo said. "Traditional Christians did not want us there. They said, 'You guys are not Christians. What Christianity do you represent? If you're not an official church then God doesn't hear your prayers.'"

into direct conflict with Muslims.

Eventually the landlord of the Beit Hanina building began receiving threats from his fellow Muslims, and the church had to leave after only two years.

The Beit Hanina congregation was Khoury's second attempt to plant a church in Jerusalem. When he was an adolescent his father, a pastor, ministered in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. During that time, Khoury's uncle, George Khoury, showed the need for a church in East Jerusalem. He also would display the power that a church body can have on people's lives, changing Steven Khoury's life forever.



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Even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

Isaiah 46:4



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In the mid-1990s, George Khoury was a stocky, 6-foot-6 man known to be a trouble-maker with anger issues. Steven Khoury's father invited George Khoury to a three-day prayer conference.

"When we invited him, the first thing he said to us is, 'Will there be free food?'" Steven Khoury said. "At the end of the three-day conference, my Uncle George — big man, tall guy, anger problems, liked very few people and very few people liked him because he was just a trouble-maker — on the third day of the conference in the Sea of Galilee he accepted Christ as his personal Savior."

On the way back from the conference George Khoury made an abrupt announcement: "We need to have this in Jerusalem."

"When he said, 'We need to have this,' what he meant was that he wanted the fellowship, the Bible and the spiritual growth," Steven Khoury said. "He wanted that, he just didn't know the lingo for it was called 'church.'"

Steven Khoury said about two years passed and his uncle quickly became a different man. He was the inspiration for the church established by Steven Khoury's father in Wadi al-Joz in East Jerusalem. George Khoury's favorite Bible verse was Matthew 16:25,

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

The verse became prophetic when a neighbor began frantically knocking on George Khoury's door as he sat in his house on the Mount of Olives one night. A group of Muslims were trying to take an elderly man's house from him by force. George Khoury took him into his house to protect him and then walked outside to face the group of Muslims and stop the attack. It was the last thing he would do.

'Peace of Christ'

"He barely walked outside his doorstep and the same men that were attacking, chasing after the old man, saw my uncle walk out onto his doorstep," Steven Khoury said. "In our culture, when somebody 'walks out' — when you take somebody's place — you're basically responsible for that man's life, and Uncle George was beaten to death with a metal rod by these men."

The elderly man survived the attack. Many years later when he could talk about what happened, he told Steven Khoury that his uncle had more peace in him than all those who killed him. When

George Khoury died, the elderly man told Steven Khoury, "The peace of Christ was upon his face."

The Wadi al-Joz congregation rented a building to use as a church but was forced to leave it as well because of persecution.

"It was always being targeted for break-ins. We had a minimum of 10 break-ins," Steven Khoury said.

When the Wadi al-Joz congregation left the building, members tried to set up house churches but quickly found that didn't work, Steven Khoury said. Whereas converts and other Christians could go to a church building with some degree of safety and anonymity, it was nearly impossible to meet unnoticed in a house church because of the small, tightly knit community that defines Palestinian society.

"They did home meetings for a while, then that started to cause problems for people because many people live in apartment buildings and the majority of the Arab community in Jerusalem, whether they be in the Old City or outside the Old City, are Muslim," Steven Khoury said.

Some of the original Wadi al-Joz members later joined other "above-ground" churches. Others left the country because of political problems and violence.

As a temporary measure the Shofat church rents a meeting hall for a few hours two times a week. They found a multistory building they would like to buy for \$3.5 million — a high price because of the competitive real estate market in Jerusalem, Steven Khoury said.

"By faith we are asking the Lord to help us raise \$3.5 million. We've been able to raise about \$700,000 so far," he said.

In spite of all that happened to him and his congregation, Steven Khoury said they are determined to stay in Jerusalem and do what he feels God has called them to do. "I believe in being persistent, and I believe in holding your ground and standing strong," he said. (MS)



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*J. Rodney Bledsoe, J.D.
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New strategic plan

Samford trustees approve plan focusing on 4 major areas

Samford University's board of trustees affirmed the framework for a new strategic plan and expanded parking areas during their regular fall meeting Sept. 5 in Birmingham.

The new plan includes four major areas of focus: emphasize student success; enhance our community; extend our reach; and ensure financial strength. Each of the four areas includes four additional "directional statements," as Samford President Andrew Westmoreland described them.

The plan, which has been in the developmental stages for several months and involved a broad representation of university constituencies, will continue to evolve through the

coming year, Westmoreland told trustees.

Trustees also approved plans for 166 additional parking spaces in several locations around campus to accommodate student enrollment growth, the new Brock School of Business building and increased visitors to campus for events. New or expanded lots will be located near the west campus entrance, the baseball/softball complex, near the current maintenance facility and adjacent to the university center.

The university will relocate facilities and maintenance offices and shops to previously unfinished space in the north parking deck. This proposed relocation was included in the original design of the deck when it was con-

structed in 2007 but postponed until needs dictated. Part of the current maintenance facility will be removed to provide for one of the new parking lots. The other facility will be renovated into additional studios, offices and storage for the art department.

Total cost of the parking and construction projects will be about \$7.3 million.

Trustees received a report from representatives of the PriceWaterhouseCoopers accounting firm on the financial audit for the fiscal year that ended June 30. The university will receive an unqualified "clean" opinion on its financial statements, the representatives said.

Trustees also received a series of positive reports from university administrators, including a 13.9 percent return on endowment investments for the fiscal year that ended June 30 and how Samford has an estimated annual economic impact of more than \$335 million on the state of Alabama.

The economic impact information comes from an independent study recently conducted by Samuel Addy and Ahmad Ijaz with the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama.

For 2012-13, the most recent year for which complete data was available, Samford's economic and fiscal impact was \$335.1 million, 2,438 jobs and \$13.2 million in income and sales taxes. The majority of the impact — \$319 million, \$4.3 million in local sales tax revenue and 1,990 jobs — is in the seven-county Birmingham-Hoover metropolitan area. (Samford)

Want to know GOD?

Pastor Terry Lolley
Big Sandy Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

Even growing up in the South (Bible Belt) there is no guarantee a person will be exposed to the gospel. I was born in Alabama but never went to church as a child or an early teen. I had no concept of God, Jesus, the Bible or anything even remotely related to religion or spirituality. That makes it even more impressive how powerful God's Word is and how deeply the Holy Spirit can convict one of the truth of the gospel and one's own sin.

I only started attending church when I was about 17 because it was a condition of dating the woman who is now my wife. One night I sat in the front for some reason I could not explain and for the first time I heard the message of Christ — of forgiveness, of eternal life and of God's judgment on those who choose not to believe. I went home that night physically ill because the truth of God's Word impacted me so heavily. The next day I went back to church and had the gospel message explained: that I was a sinner, that God loved me and that He had provided a way for me to know Him through His Son Jesus Christ. All I had to do was come to Christ by faith, trusting in what He had accomplished through His death and resurrection.

Since I had no prior knowledge of these truths the Holy Spirit must have worked overtime in order to bring someone like me to the point of salvation. While I did not fully understand all that had happened at that moment, I realized later the truth of John 14:6: "Jesus told him, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

It is not how much we know that saves us, it is the Who that we know — Christ. I have met many people who know more Bible facts than I do yet they have not come to salvation through Christ. Luke writes of Jesus Christ in Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it." Have you trusted Christ? 🙏

Other Alabama schools receive rankings

(continued from page 1)

leader of revitalization of Christian faith and character in America" by the year 2020.

Both schools received other national recognitions in July. Forbes, Inc. ranked Samford the top university in the state, and UMobile was named in "The 50 Best Christian Colleges in the U.S." by Christian Universities Online.

Other Alabama schools receiving high rankings on the 2015 *U.S. News* list include

Tuskegee University (No. 9 in the "Regional Colleges South" category); Huntingdon College in Montgomery (No. 23 in the "Regional Colleges South" category); and Spring Hill College in Mobile (No. 18 in the "Regional Universities South" category).

The University of Alabama and Auburn University ranked No. 88 and No. 103 respectively in the "National Universities" category. (Samford and UMobile contributed)

For more information about the U.S. News rankings, visit www.usnews.com/education.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR: Dwight Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 520 North 29th Street, Gadsden, AL 35904, or email a resumé to: dwightbaptistchurch@comcast.net. Deadline for resumés: Oct. 31.

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: Mission-minded and passionately dynamic in sharing God's Word with a fast growing, contemporary start-up Baptist church in Arab, Ala. Email resumé to: newcovenantbaptistarab@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP: Concord Baptist Church in Calera, Ala., is accepting resumés for a part-time minister of worship to lead two blended services on Sunday morning. Please email resumés to: randynell@charter.net.

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.

TWO POSITIONS AVAILABLE: Deerfoot Baptist Church in Trussville is seeking two part-time positions: interim preschool/children's minister and interim

student minister. Experience required. Please submit resumés or questions by email to: phall@deerfootbaptist.org.

YOUTH MINISTER: Red Bay First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time youth minister. Resumés may be sent to: Glen Vinson, P.O. Box 360, Red Bay, AL 35582, or emailed to: glen93@bellsouth.net.

YOUTH MINISTER: Candidate should be a Christian with a clear calling to minister to youth. Must be committed to prayer, Bible study, disciple-making and the local church. Email resumé with both personal and ministerial references to: glwalker20@gmail.com. Experience preferred, education preferred, salary negotiable, full/part-time not based on pay but on candidates availability.

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

YOUTH PASTOR: Autaugaville Baptist Church is currently seeking a part-time youth pastor to lead our youth ministry program primarily grades 7-12. Please submit resumés to: Dr. Garner Clark, 245 First Street, Prattville, AL 36067. Website: www.ataugavillebaptist.org.

BIVOCATIONAL STUDENT MINISTER: South Hamilton Baptist Church is currently seeking resumés for bivocational student minister. Please email resumés 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.

OTHER POSITIONS

LIVE-IN POSITIONS: King's Home, a Christian youth facility in Central Alabama, seeking mature Christian couples for live-in positions who want to make a significant difference in the lives of at-risk youth. Must be at least 25 years old, married at least two years, clear criminal and driving record. Email resumés to: liz@kingshome.com or fax to 205-678-7372. Indicate position.

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Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



2014 marks 250th anniversary of 'Amazing Grace' writer's minister ordination

John Newton (1725–1807) wrote "Amazing Grace," perhaps the most famous hymn ever. This year marks the 250th anniversary of his ordination as an Anglican minister.

Newton was born in London on July 24, 1725. His mother died when he was a child. His father commanded a merchant ship. At age 11, Newton went to sea with him and made six voyages before his father retired.

The British navy impressed Newton into service on a man-of-war ship. He deserted but was recaptured and exchanged into service on a slave ship bound for Sierra Leone.

Calling out to God

He became captain of his own slave ship. During a violent storm he prayed for God to rescue him. Although he did not surrender himself to Christ, he remembered March 10, 1748, for the rest

of his life. "On that day," he said in his autobiography, "the Lord ... delivered me out of deep waters." Despite the experience he continued in the slave trade until 1754.

Several years later he "gained some clear views of the infinite righteousness and grace of Christ Jesus my Lord." He wrote, "I surrender myself wholly to You, wholly, wholly. Please accept me." He taught himself Latin, Greek and Hebrew, met John Wesley, founder of Methodism, and became a disciple of evangelist George Whitefield.

He applied to the Archbishop of York for ordination in the late 1750s but was not accepted until several years later. Finally he was ordained as a deacon April 29, 1764, and ordained as a priest June 17. That day he accepted a church at Olney, Buckinghamshire.

Newton became respected by both Anglicans and Nonconformists. His preaching

was so popular that the Olney church had to be enlarged to accommodate the crowds.

In 1767 poet William Cowper moved to Olney. He and Newton became close friends and started a series of weekly prayer meetings. They wrote a new hymn for almost every service.

Among Newton's 280 hymns was "Faith's Review and Expectation," known today as "Amazing Grace." In its original form it had six stanzas. Other writers have added verses.

Newton became prominent in the anti-slavery movement. In 1779 he left Olney for St. Mary Woolnoth in London. He drew large congregations and influenced many people, among them William Wilberforce. A member of Parliament, Wilberforce sought his advice about leaving politics. Newton encouraged him to "serve God where he was." Wilberforce spent the rest

of his life working toward the abolition of slavery.

In the late 1780s Newton wrote a tract, "Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade," describing the horrors of the slave trade and lamenting the role he had played. He joined Wilberforce in his campaign for abolition of the slave trade.

In February 1807 Parliament passed a law finally abolishing it.

Newton died in London 10 months later on Dec. 21, 1807. His tombstone reads, "John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, A servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."

Newton's legacy lives on today in his former church of Olney. It provides philanthropy for the Sierra Leone town of Newton. ☪



NEWTON

REFLECTIONS



Will churches be able to continue providing tax-exempt housing allowance for ministers?

The fate of a 60-year-old provision that allows churches to provide ministers with a tax-exempt "parsonage allowance" now lies in the hands of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The Chicago-based appellate court heard oral arguments Sept. 9 in a lawsuit filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation claiming the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) "confers a significant tax benefit upon religious clergy that is not available to nonclergy taxpayers."

Church, state separation

The Madison, Wis., based group that advocates for "freethinkers" including atheists, agnostics and skeptics claims the exemption is "patently unfair" and a violation of the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state.

A legal brief filed in June noted that even the Bible commands citizens to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

In November 2013 a federal judge agreed, ruling that a section of the tax code granting a benefit for "ministers of the gospel" not available to everyone else favors religion over nonreligion, thus cre-

ating an establishment of religion prohibited by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Southern Baptists are among those interested in the case. Three entities of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) joined other religious organizations in urging the 7th Circuit Court to reverse the ruling of Barbara Crabb, the federal judge who said the allowance violates the First Amendment's prohibition of government establishment of religion.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and the International Mission Board signed onto a friend-of-the-court brief with a diverse array of religious organizations in support of the housing allowance. GuideStone Financial Resources, the SBC's financial and health benefits entity, joined in a brief with other denominational benefit boards as part of the Church Alliance. Both briefs were filed in April.

The briefs are based on a legal doctrine known as "convenience of the employer."

Convenience of the employer is based on the premise that for something to qualify as income there must be an economic gain

that primarily benefits the taxpayer personally.

Employees might enjoy things like meals, travel and office furnishings, for example, but if they are provided primarily to benefit their employer, they are not counted as taxable income.

Other lodging jobs

The same principle applies to lodging. For jobs like hotel managers required to live on-site, government workers serving abroad or seamen who live aboard ships, lodging is a key component of their work.

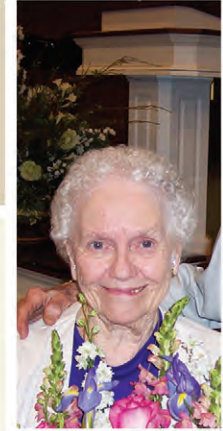
The Becket Fund claimed removing the parsonage allowance would increase church-state entanglement by putting the IRS in the position of determining which deductions claimed as business expenses qualify as ministry. (ABP, BP)

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Family MATTERS

SEPTEMBER
2014



Celebrating *the Butlers* by Steve Sellers

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Butler have served as Volunteer Associational Ambassadors in Marion Baptist Association for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) since 2004. Our ambassadors are volunteers who help us communicate the mission of ABCH to children and families. Being on mission is the heartbeat of Marguerite and Gilbert. At 90 years of age, they are still going on mission trips as they have for many years past. They are cheerleaders, encouraging Alabama Baptists to flesh out Matthew 28:19-20.

They both are retired educators and have sought to share and show the love of Christ through lifestyle evangelism. When I first met with the Butlers, they shared how they had previously been foster parents. They knew first-hand the needs of children and families in crisis and the importance of churches being aware of those in the shadows of their steeples. The Butlers also wanted to help the churches in their Association to see how ABCH could come alongside to help them live out James 1:27.

Alabama Baptists have over 3200 churches in our convention. It is impossible to touch all these churches to keep them informed about the needs of our ministry. Ambassadors help us by not only sharing our needs, but ways that others can help meet those needs. The Butlers have been such a blessing to all who serve in the Children's Homes ministry and to those whom we serve. If you want to see what Matthew 28:19-20 looks like, get to know Gilbert and Marguerite Butler to see their faith put into action.

The Butlers recently retired from their Ambassador role with ABCH. Rod Marshall (President/CEO of ABCH), Kenny Hatcher (the Butlers' Pastor at First Baptist Church in Guin, AL), and I were recently given the opportunity to celebrate the Butlers' faithful service to our ministry with many of their family members and friends. It is the faithful support from men and women like Gilbert and Marguerite that helps make ABCH such a special ministry. On behalf of all of us at Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, thank you to the Butlers for your faithful service in advancing the love of Christ to hurting children!

Steve Sellers serves as Church Relations Manager and Chaplain for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. If you are interested in learning more about our Ambassador program or contacting your local Association Ambassador, contact Steve directly at steves@abchome.org or call (205) 982-1112.



“We’re going to treasure the memories of our work that has been so dear to children.”

– Marguerite Butler

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Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Jack Wilbanks Shannon

Former minister of senior adults dies

Jack Wilbanks Shannon, a retired minister of senior adults, died Sept. 6. He was 88. After graduating from high school, Shannon served in the United States Marine Corps and fought in Iwo Jima. Following his service, he obtained a bachelor of arts degree from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, a master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a master of arts degree from the University of Alabama.

Shannon, a member of Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, served as the minister of education and later the minister of senior adults for Calvary Baptist for 32 years before retiring in 1989. He also served on the staffs of First Baptist Church, Andalusia, and a church in Florida.

Shannon is survived by his wife of 65 years, Eula; two children; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. (TAB)



SHANNON

Faith-rooted entrepreneur

Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy dies at 93

Chick-fil-A founder S. Truett Cathy's death Sept. 8 highlighted the legacy the 93-year-old left behind. He was known for creating the first fast-food chicken sandwich and closing his restaurants on Sunday, and the positive, service-oriented environment of the restaurant chain remains as strong today as when he launched it.

"I was not so committed to financial success that I was willing to abandon my principles and priorities," Cathy once said. "Our decision to close on Sunday was our way of honoring God and of directing our attention to things that mattered more than our business."

Cathy, one of Southern Baptists' most respected businessmen, was surrounded by loved ones when he died at his home, according to an announcement from the Atlanta-based company.

Mel Blackaby, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Ga., described Cathy as "perhaps the most gracious Christian man

I have ever known, and it was a privilege to be his pastor.

"Having taught eighth-grade boys Sunday School class for 52 years, he chose to invest his life in the next generation of leaders," Blackaby said in a statement to *The Christian Index*.



CATHY

"Everywhere I go, I meet leaders with a smile on their face who say, 'I am one of Truett's boys.'"

"His winsome personality left a positive impression on every person he met, and his deep love for the Lord was undeniable," Blackaby said. "In the marketplace he may be known as 'the

inventor of the chicken sandwich,' but his success in business simply gave him the opportunity to serve people and point them to Christ. Truett's life is the story of a man and his God. He leaves an example for all to follow."

More than 1,800 Chick-fil-A restaurants operate in 40 states and Washington, recording \$5 billion in annual sales in 2013 and 47 consecutive years of annual sales increases. Chick-fil-A was listed among the "Top 20 Brands

with the Most Loyal Fans on Facebook" in a report by market research firm LoudDoor released in August.

Cathy, a native of Eatonton, Ga., who moved to Atlanta with his family at age 4, has received more than 100 national, state and community awards since 1984 and 18 honorary doctorates since 1991.

His key Bible verse was Proverbs 22:1: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold."

After serving in the Army from 1939 to 1945, Cathy and his brother, Ben, opened their first restaurant in 1946, a venue so small they named it The Dwarf Grill (later, The Dwarf House). A second suburban Atlanta location opened in 1951 but burned down in 1960. In reopening and repurposing the restaurant, Cathy became one of the pioneers of fast-food restaurants in greater Atlanta.

His first Chick-fil-A

In 1967, Cathy continued to chart new ground, opening his first Chick-fil-A venue in a mall followed in 1986 by the first free-standing Chick-fil-A.

Ethical and biblical principles were central to each of Cathy's steps forward. "We live in a changing world, but we need to be reminded that the important things have not changed," he said. "I have always encouraged my restaurant operators and team members to give back to the local community. We should be about more than just selling chicken; we should be a part of our customers' lives and the communities in which we serve."

Cathy's son, Dan, became president of Chick-fil-A in 2001 and chairman and CEO in 2013 while Truett Cathy continued in the role of chairman emeritus until his death. (BP)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GAMBLING

Thank you for your comments about the evils of gambling — "Two Fights Over Legalized Gambling" — in the Aug. 7 issue. I'm thankful for Luther Strange also and the job he's doing in getting rid of the gambling machines.

Nina Barron
Clanton, Ala. 📧

Singing with the Saints

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 21

Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

WHY ONE OF US? Hebrews 2:14-18

To Destroy the Devil (14-16)

This first verse presents two facts about Christ and His death. First it declares that Jesus shared the same humanity with human beings. Second it presents the reasons for His death. Hebrews 1 declared Jesus' superiority to angels. This verse states His equality with human beings in that He shared their humanity. In the incarnation at Bethlehem, Jesus became what He had not been before. He had always been God. He now also became a human being. We call Jesus the God-man.

Jesus entered His incarnate life on earth by birth and He departed this life by death. He did not merely appear to be human; He actually shared our humanity. No one who merely seemed to be human or who resembled human beings could meet our needs. Jesus was a real person; therefore He can meet all our needs.

Jesus died to destroy the devil. Jesus' death was not a defeat. It was a victory over sin and death. Sin always results in death (Rom. 5:12). Our sin caused Jesus to die. His death paid for our sin and guilt.

Many people wonder: "How can Satan be destroyed when he seems to be alive and well on earth today?" Jesus triumphed over the devil at the cross (Col. 2:15), but we live in a time when the full effects of Jesus' death on the cross have not been fully realized. Satan is still active as a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). He still has limited power in this age (Eph. 6:11) although his future doom is certain (Rev. 20:10).

Some people ask: "How did Satan hold the power of death?" This statement presents a problem because Scripture asserts that God alone has charge of the issues of life and death (Luke 12:5). Satan took the lead in introducing sin into the world by his successful temptation of Adam (Rom. 5:12). Satan has the power of death because he introduced sin that causes death. Death is the fruit of sin (Rom. 5:21).

The death and resurrection of Jesus have rendered powerless the one who was formerly the master of death.

Jesus destroyed our enemy but He also liberated us from our chief fear. Death still occurs but we no longer need to be afraid of it. Like Satan, death has a limited sovereignty. Death itself will die at the return of Christ with the resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 15:54). This hope sets us free from the fear of death that can enslave us. Death cannot separate saved people from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39).

Christ has not yet abolished death. He has defeated the devil who had the power of death. We still face natural death. The removal of sin by the death of Jesus withdraws the sting of sin (1 Cor. 15:55-57) and one day Jesus will completely destroy death (1 Cor. 15:54). Jesus' victory over death is seen in His resurrection. His resurrection is the cornerstone of our hope that we as Christians need not fear death.

Christ became a human being to help sinful human beings. In the incarnation, Christ stooped lower than the position of an angel to become a human being. As a human being, Christ was able to provide salvation for human beings.

To Make Propitiation (17-18)

Jesus had a complete, perfect humanity in order that He could "become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God" and "make propitiation for the sins of the people." Unless Jesus became fully human in every respect, except for sin, He could not represent believers as their High Priest. Jesus must be human in order to serve as High Priest on behalf of humanity.

Jesus shared our human nature so that He could make propitiation for the sins of the people. Propitiation conveys the sense of an atoning sacrifice that puts away sin and satisfies the wrath of God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1) because Jesus' death paid for our sin and satisfied the righteous wrath of God. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By James Barnette, Ph.D. Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

CONNECTED IN GROWTH Ephesians 4:11-16

Verses 11-16 constitute a single sentence in the original Greek. Packed within that extended sentence are vital descriptions that link leadership roles in the Christian community with the need for the church to grow to full maturity.

Church Leaders Equip Us to Do Ministry (11-12)

Verses 11-12 begin with a list of some of those leadership roles within the church. Unlike Romans 12:7-8 which focuses on roles within the church (serving, teaching, mercy, etc.), the list in Ephesians extends beyond the local parish. The first three offices listed — apostle, prophet and evangelist — move outside the church to the world that the church intends to reach. Being of more "external" function, these three roles were vital for the founding of churches in the earliest years. The final two offices listed — pastors and teachers — represent those who take on internal leadership in local communities.

Pastors and teachers were no less important than the first three offices listed. It is important to recall that the early Church predated bound books. The printing press would not be invented for another 1,400 years. In Paul's day the gospel was transmitted primarily by word of mouth. Teachers had the immense responsibility of being repositories of the gospel and instructors of proper doctrine. Most pagans who became believers knew nothing about Christianity except that Christ had somehow touched their hearts. Teachers and pastors were the shepherds who strove to keep these young Christians from being infected by the pagan world. The new believers were regularly at risk of lapsing back into their old heathen ways. Pastors and teachers protected their flocks from the "wolves" lurking in the world at large.

The word for "prepare" or "equip" was used in medicine to describe surgery for

setting a broken limb or for resetting a joint that is out of place. Paul uses it here to describe putting a person into the condition that he or she ought to be, both personally and vocationally. In addition to equipping people for service these church leaders also function to build up the body of Christ.

The Purpose of Our Ministry is to Strive Toward Spiritual Maturity (13)

Ephesians assumes that all Christians are a part of the building process. Maturity involves the church community as a whole, not merely particular members. A series of short phrases describes the goal of ministry: unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, maturity, measure of the full stature of Christ. Attainment of these goals reflect the "new man" in Christ noted by Paul in Ephesians 2:15.

Paul ends these goals with the one most cherished and most challenging. The aim of the church is that her members reach a stature that can be measured by the fullness of Christ. The goal of the church is to bring up men and women who reflect Christ Himself in word, action and motive. Critical here is realizing that church members do not call pastors and pay them to do all the work. The church calls the pastor, and they follow the pastor who, by ministering the Word of God, primes the congregants for their ministry in the world. This equipping work of the pastor is described by Paul in his letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:13-17).

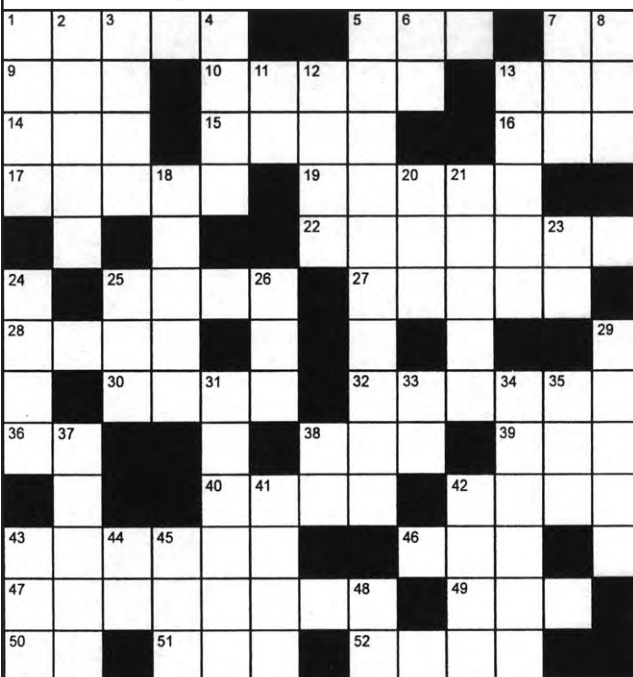
Support Each Other in Growing Toward Spiritual Maturity (14-16)

Paul had already warned against specific forms of false teaching in his letter to the Colossians (see Col. 2:2-4, 8). Since the word "schemes" appears in Ephesians 6:11 for the devil, the phrase "deceitful scheming" probably connects false teaching with the influence of the demonic.

The concluding phrases in this long sentence shift back to the positive conditions for building up the body of Christ. The key to communal solidarity is that of "speaking the truth in love." ☞

Christian Crossword

By Joann Horn Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- ___ as a grain of mustard seed. (Matt. 17:20)
- I have ___ you with milk. (1 Cor. 3:2)
- For ___ Jonas was three days and three nights. (Matt. 12:40)
- Opposite of "young."
- Heavenly messenger.
- He is of ___; ask him. (John 9:21)
- What foolish virgins forgot to take. (Matt. 25:3)
- The lilies, they ___ not. (Matt. 6:28)
- ___ that was washed to her wallowing. (2 Pet. 2:22)
- Plural of "tooth."
- They shall be one ___. (Gen. 2:24)
- Inflict suffering.
- Capable.
- Unlearned and unstable ___. (2 Pet. 3:16)
- Painful sore under skin.

- Hollow-type grass. (Matt. 13:12)
- The Lord is my ___, and I will not fear. (Heb. 13:6)
- O ___ of little faith? (Matt. 6:30)
- Number before seven.
- Large body of water.
- May my teaching ___ as the rain. (Deut. 32:2)
- A type of eagle found in North America.
- ___ my soul from their destructions. (Ps. 35:17)
- Be sick.
- Man who preaches any other gospel. (Gal. 1:8)
- Flightless bird.
- Matthew. (abbr.)
- To stroke or caress.
- Yours and mine.
- No ___ with works of darkness. (Eph. 5:11)
- Election. (abbr.)
- Four days ___ I was fasting. (Acts 10:30)
- Stitch.
- Opposite of "yes."
- The ___ of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 10:45)
- Remainder of burnt wood.
- Furniture we eat at.
- To go astray.
- An odor of a sweet ___. (Phil. 4:18)
- New Testament. (abbr.)
- Children, ___ your parents. (Col. 3:20)
- What we breathe.
- Finish.
- Swap.

Down

- Twelve inches.
- Foreigner.
- They learn to be ___. (1 Tim. 5:13)
- For whosoever ___, to him shall be given.
- Exodus. (abbr.)
- ___ and hymns and spiritual songs. (Col. 3:16)

- Snakelike fish.
- Chosen of God.
- For God ___ loved the world. (John 3:16)
- I will give you ___. (Matt. 11:28)
- A coffin.
- Male sheep.
- Southern state. (abbr.)
- Vessel for drinking.
- Is it lawful to ___ good? (Mark 3:4)



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

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



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



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



7. Thrive
By Casting Crowns
(Thrive)

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

9. We Believe
By Newsboys
(Restart Deluxe Edition)

10. Start a Fire
By Unspoken
(Unspoken)

Source: iTunes at press time

Life-changing message



Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

Contemporary Christian singer/songwriter Michael W. Smith recently released his album 'Sovereign,' which 'focuses on reminding people about the sovereignty of God, His power and majesty,' Smith said.

Michael W. Smith connects audience to Christ's love

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As one of the most popular contemporary Christian singer/songwriters Michael W. Smith doesn't miss a beat when it comes to connecting audiences to the life-changing love of Christ.

The songs on his album "Sovereign" reflect his desire to introduce and incorporate worship songs while performing concerts in various venues around the world.

"The theme of this album focuses on reminding people about the sovereignty of God, His power and majesty," Smith said. "As a believer, you can't help but want to worship and praise Him when you think about the greatness and supremacy of God.

"We are living in challenging and chaotic times, when so many people are going through trials and adversities. I hope the lyrics of these songs remind people that God's hand is still upon them."

Smith's music and message are being well received. The worship project debuted in the Top 10 of the Billboard 200 chart. In addition, the album secured the No. 1 spot on the Christian/Gospel album and digital sales charts as well as the Praise & Worship albums chart. The album also ranked No. 1 on iTunes and Amazon Christian and Gospel charts in the United States and Canada.

To help audiences further connect with the message behind the music the album also is available as a deluxe edition and includes a special DVD concert.

For the past 30 years Smith has been taking listeners on a musical journey into the heart of worship while delivering powerful messages about grace, love and redemption through his songs.

Along the way he has amassed an impressive catalog of achievements including an American Music Award, three Grammy Awards and more than 40 Dove Awards from the Gospel Music Association.

"Songwriting is typically inspired by life experiences and walking with people who are struggling," Smith said. "When I turn on the news and see all these horrific things going on, it often leaves me wondering if I will be able to put these emotions into words. It really takes spending time in prayer and asking God to give me the right words to minister to people who are hurting and struggling."

Through the years Smith has been presented with unique opportunities to share the gospel through songs in various settings.

Hymns project

He released a hymns project earlier this year that is exclusively available at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store locations and online. Continuing to raise the bar musically Smith also collaborated with several well-known recording artists for an upcoming Christmas album to be released Sept. 30.

Wherever he performs he is committed to sharing the gospel with audiences, and his tours consistently rank among the best attended in the country.

In addition to his music Smith desires to create platforms that would reach and help those in need.

He established Rocketown in his hometown of Nashville, which serves as a safe place for young people to enjoy music and artists to be discovered.

Smith also raises awareness for a variety of missions organizations including Compassion International and Samaritan's Purse.

As the years pass by Smith continues to be amazed and humbled by God leading this musical journey.

"My favorite part is this platform that these opportunities have presented," he said. "Whether I am hanging out with presidents, prime ministers or orphans, each platform provides a chance to share Christ's love in a unique way. I'm very grateful for these opportunities and having the chance to share about a message that has changed my life." ❧

"I hope the lyrics of these songs remind people that God's hand is still upon them."

Michael W. Smith
singer/songwriter



Familyfest volunteers from Hillcrest Baptist Church, Byram, Miss., host a backyard Bible club.

SERVING

together

Photo courtesy of WMU

Volunteers from 13 states serve through Familyfest

More than 220 missions volunteers from children to senior adults gathered to serve in eastern Kentucky during national Woman's Missionary Union's (WMU) Familyfest July 19–24. Participants represented churches, groups and families from Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

Todd Rader, pastor of Ephesus Baptist Church, Winchester, Ky., and chairman for the missions development committee of Boone's Creek Baptist Association, said, "Familyfest is a wonderful opportunity for individuals, churches and associations to be directly involved in hands-on ministry opportunities that will impact communities for Christ."

Executive director for Kentucky WMU Joy Bolton said, "As families serve together during Familyfest, the experience away from home and from other distractions allows for special bonding time. Both parents and children see one another in a new light as they serve side by side."

Tammy Glad, a member of Turning Point at Calvary Church, St. Augustine, Fla., served at Familyfest with her husband and daughter. "I was blessed to watch so many of our children loving on the Kentucky community at Choo Choo Park. Watching our children living out God's Word was amazing," Glad said.

David Allen, a 14-year-old volunteer from Graceview Baptist Church, Tomball, Texas, served with his grandparents during Familyfest.

"Age should have no limit in serving, helping and sharing God with others," he said. "This might be my first but [it's] not my last missions trip. And sharing it with my grandparents is the best."

This Familyfest was a partnership between national WMU, Kentucky WMU, Boone's Creek Association and Appalachian Regional Ministry. Appalachia, a cultural region that stretches from New

York to Mississippi, is one of extreme poverty having 37 of the 100 poorest counties in the United States. According to the North American Mission Board's website, more than 70 percent of the region is unchurched with some counties as high as 90 percent unchurched.

Volunteers worked in Appalachian communities in eastern Kentucky in partnership with a variety of churches, schools, local ministries and nonprofits. They led backyard Bible clubs and evangelism ministries, prayer-walked, prepared classrooms for the new school year, made blankets for senior adult shut-ins and did some light construction.



Photo courtesy of WMU

Members of Girls in Action from Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville, pack hygiene kits for inmates and their families during Familyfest.

Suzanne Reece, national WMU ministry consultant and onsite coordinator of Familyfest, said when the volunteers were serving at a local school, the principal continued to thank her for bringing volunteers.

Bolton said, "This is our prayer that people will go home and see their own communities in a new way by seeing needs and opportunities they've never taken note of before."

Even the local volunteers said they became more aware of the lostness in their own state. One shared that Familyfest was a time "to rethink how we 'do church' and reach out" when their team encountered person after person who used to be in church but is no longer.

Place of service

Rader said, "I have returned amazed at what God can do when we place ourselves in positions of service for His kingdom. Familyfest may just be the spark that you are searching for to personally become more involved in missions."

National WMU offers Familyfest opportunities for all volunteers age 6 and up and Missionsfest for volunteers age 18 and up. Future opportunities include Missionsfest in Toledo, Ohio, Oct. 1–5 and Familyfest in Indianapolis, July 18–22, 2015.

For more information, visit wmu.com/trips. (WMU)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Sudan closes 500-member church in Khartoum

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Security agents in Sudan padlocked a 500-member church's building Aug. 24 said Christian sources, who fear the government may try to sell it.

In the latest incident in a nearly two-year wave of church demolitions, closures and confiscations Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) forcibly closed the Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC) church building in Khartoum that houses the Khartoum Christian Center (KCC).

"The church is concerned that the building might be sold by the government, which renders more than 500 worshippers to have no place for worship," an anonymous source said.

"The government has made it clear that no member or church leader is allowed to worship at the SPC building until further notification," the source said.

Though the government has stated the closure is temporary, officials have given no timeline. The government said it is closing the church building because it was originally designated as office space.

The church has a deed showing it owns the building and property, raising the question of the government's right to sell it. NISS had initially closed the church Aug. 13 but later reopened it.

One of the sources said that with God all things are possible and that the church needs intervention and advocacy in the face of the violation of freedom of worship.

"As we firstly rely on our Lord's grace and protection that His name will be glorified through this tribulation the SPC is passing through, we also urge you to send this message to wherever you see it's convenient for help," the source said.

Pastors in Bhutan sentenced to prison, fined

DOROKHA, Bhutan — A court in Bhutan sentenced Pastor Tandin Wangyal on Sept. 10 to three years and 11 months in prison for receiving funds for ministry activities from a Christian organization. The next day he was granted a reduced sentence of two years and 11 months after paying a \$763 fine.

The verdict from the court in Dorokha, Samtse District asserts the pastor received \$11,864 in funding from a foreign Christian organization to conduct trainings and spread Christianity in the Buddhist country, sources said.

Another pastor, M.B. Thapa (known as Lobzang), was sentenced to two years and four months for taking Wangyal to a village for a gathering for which he had not obtained prior permission, but he was entitled to pay a fine of \$1,678 "in lieu" of prison that enabled him to remain free.

Wangyal was convicted under Article 71 of the Civil Society Organization Act of Bhutan, which outlaws raising funds for activities "in contravention of the laws of the country" and without prior permission.

The pastor has 10 days to appeal, but in comments hours before he was detained Sept. 9, Wangyal said he had already filed an appeal in Samtse District Court and was hoping for bail.

"I am worried about my wife and my three little sons," he said. "Please pray for me and my family."

Anti-terrorism police officers raid Baptist family's home

NAVOI, Uzbekistan — As a Baptist family in Navoi, Uzbekistan, gathered with relatives and friends for a Sunday morning meeting for worship, 11 anti-terrorism police officers and other officials raided the Alpayev family home.

They searched the home without a warrant and went on to search the home of another church member present, seizing all the religious literature they could find. Police and other authorities keep telling him and other Baptists — including during the Aug. 17 raid — that he cannot keep his Christian books and even his Bible in his home.

Artur Alpayev's mother (born in Uzbekistan and visiting from Israel) and a couple from Russia (the wife also born in Uzbekistan) were subsequently expelled from Uzbekistan. Fines are expected. Sadridin, an official who introduced himself as assistant head of the Navoi anti-terrorism police, claimed he is "new in the police department, and I do not know the details." Raids, literature seizures and fines have continued across Uzbekistan. ☞