

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Sept. 25, 2014
Vol. 179, No. 38

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INSIDE



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Are you a 'Culture Warrior?'

Sunday School teachers, lay leaders hold political clout, study says

Volunteer lay leaders serve as political opinion leaders within churches with considerable power to deepen — or bridge — gaps between religion and politics, according to a new study by Baylor University researchers. Yet several Alabama Baptist pastors with strong Sunday School programs believe church leaders should be mindful of the influence that comes with leadership and be careful to lead people according to God's Word and not their personal preferences.

Research study

The study — "Sunday School Teacher, Culture Warrior: The Politics of Lay Leaders in Three Religious

Traditions" — is published in *Social Science Quarterly* and is based on analysis of the Baylor Religion Survey, conducted by the Gallup Organization.

"Within congregations, certain people's voices have more sway — 'culture warriors,'" said researcher and co-author Brandon Martinez, a doctoral candidate in sociology at Baylor. "The clergy may have the pulpit for captive audiences, but that's not the whole story. Lay leaders have a different and distinct influence

from the clergy. People look to them for cues, which could either reinforce or challenge the stance of the clergy."

"The influence which key leaders in our churches have is quite real."

**Pastor Edwin Jenkins
FBC Athens**

The research shows that non-ordained leaders in all three traditions — evangelicals, mainline Protestants and Catholics — are not only the most engaged in church activities, but also the most politically engaged individuals in their congregations.

They set the tone for small group interaction by teaching Sunday School, leading prayer groups,

chairing committees, hosting social gatherings and organizing community service.

Edwin Jenkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens, described these observations and research findings as "quite illuminating but not surprising."

Influential people

"The influence which key leaders in our churches have is quite real," he said. "Throughout the decades that I have been privileged to serve in local churches I have benefitted tremendously from the godly involvement and influence of key lay leaders. Their influence extends to matters within and outside the congregation as well."

(See 'Power,' page 4)

Faith and Family
Dealing with **Domestic**
abuse
Coming next week...



COMMENT

Using an Electronic Bible

It was a first but it will not be the last. On June 2, 2014, Susan LaVine became the first federal official to place her hand on an electronic device instead of on a Bible as she was sworn in as United States ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The device, a Kindle Touch according to the *Washington Post*, was open to the U.S. Constitution as she pledged to uphold and defend that historic document.

Previously practically all public officials used a Bible when taking their oaths of office. A few months ago a New York official used an iPad open to a Bible passage when a printed copy of the Bible could not be found. There are other reports of city officials using a Bible app on iPads for their swearing in ceremonies. But LaVine is the first federal official.

As a former vice president for Microsoft in Seattle, her choice of an electronic device might not be all that surprising. She has lived and worked in a digital world for decades. Increasingly so will the rest of us.

Still seeing a printed copy of the Bible replaced with a Kindle book reader, an iPad or a smartphone galls some people. Using a printed copy of the Bible communicates symbolically, if not directly, to all observing the scene. It indicates a reliance and relationship with God. What the electronic device indicates is a question. Only the one using it actually knows what is on it.

Media took notice

Perhaps that is one reason the public news media took notice of the electronic device when Vice President Joe Biden administered the oath of office to LaVine at the U.S. Embassy in London.

Increasingly churchgoers observe the same trend — electronic devices replacing printed copies of the Bible.

No longer is it uncommon for a pastor to take some type of electronic tablet with him to the pulpit instead of a printed Bible. The pastor easily toggles between Scripture passages,



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

sermon notes, video and audio clips and other resources used for Bible study and preaching.

Some may feel uneasy that the pastor does not use a printed copy of the Word of God but as more and more people live and work in an electronic world the practice will be more and more accepted. Certainly it is easier for the speaker to have so many resources at his fingertips than it is to have a variety of books, printed notes and other items.

Replacing printed books

From seminary classrooms to the Sunday School class, electronic devices are replacing printed books. Professors prepare lectures on electronic devices. They skip between the Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek New Testament and modern-day English translations of the Bible with a swipe of a finger across a screen rather than going from book to book.

Legion are the Sunday School class members who no longer carry a printed Bible with them each Sunday morning. Instead they open their Bible apps on their smartphone for Scripture reading and Bible study. Most Bible apps offer a variety of translations from which to read the designated passage.

Even at major events such as state evangelism conferences or Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conferences big name personalities frequently take their electronic device from the back pocket of their blue jeans when it is time to read the Scriptures.

Speakers are not the only ones using electronic devices during church services. Instead of taking notes with a pencil and paper, many people type notes into their electronic devices. Some churches encourage people to share reactions with others in real time using their phones and tablets.

This can cause problems. One pastor tells of being reprimanded by a deacon who attended a conference with him. The pastor used an electronic device to read Scripture and take notes during the opening conference session. Afterward the deacon wanted to know why they had come if the pastor was not going to pay attention. The deacon concluded the pastor was busy communicating with friends or roaming the Internet during the various sermons because the pastor seemed absorbed by his electronic tablet.

It was not until the pastor showed him the notes taken from the various sermons that the deacon realized how the pastor used his electronic device.

Unfortunately some people do use their electronic devices to distract them from worship and Bible study. It is possible to sit in a congregation and carry on a digital conversation with someone in the auditorium or across the globe. It is possible to sit quietly and read a novel or explore some website via an electronic device.

But no one has ever found a way to ensure that everyone in an auditorium participates in a worship service or pays attention to the pastor, even before smartphones and tablets existed. Have you ever seen someone asleep in church? Has your mind ever wandered during a sermon?

Word of God itself

Sometimes it is necessary to remind ourselves that it is not the form in which the Word of God is shared that is powerful. It is the Word of God itself. When God promised that His Word would not return void (Isa. 55:11) He did not reference the form His Word would take; only that it would come from His mouth.

The first Bibles were hand copied on vellum scrolls or on papyri. One can imagine some of the monks who had given their lives to meticulously copying Scriptures onto beautiful scrolls complaining about Bibles being printed in mass on a Guttenberg printing press. Yet that was one of the most important steps in getting the Bible into the hands of individuals so the power of God could be experienced personally through reading the Scriptures.

The power of the Bible comes from God Himself, the One who breathed it into existence. The challenge today is to share and proclaim the Word of God as widely as possible in whatever form that communicates. 📖

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

SUPPORT OF DAVID PLATT

The first place my parents took me after I was born was to a Southern Baptist church. I've been a proud Southern Baptist member ever since. After reading the guest editorial by Ron Madison (page 6, Sept. 11 issue — 'My Reason for Not Endorsing David Platt as IMB President') I was incredibly sad and hurt.

My family and I have been members of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, for longer than David Platt and I can honestly say he has allowed God to use him to change us — myself, my family and my church.

We look at missions and the lost in a much more compassionate and loving way. I am 54 years old and I have

never had a pastor with such a heart for spreading God's Word. The Cooperative Program is wonderful — I've been tithing since I could put a quarter in an offering envelope — so I've supported it for a long time and will continue to do so. (see 'Letters,' page 8)





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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

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

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The Vestavia Hills High School football team celebrates with Coach Buddy Anderson after a 14-3 win over Hewitt-Trussville High School on Sept. 12 that brought Anderson's career record to 310-126-0, surpassing the previous state record of 309-126-3 set by retired Fayette County Coach Waldon Tucker.



Photo by Karim Shamsi-Basha

God's calling to COACH

Shades Mountain deacon becomes state's winningest high school football coach

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Vestavia Hills High School football coach Buddy Anderson is now the winningest high school football coach in Alabama history, a milestone in a career that has been both a professional and spiritual calling.

Anderson, a deacon at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, in Birmingham Baptist Association has spent his entire 42-year coaching career at Vestavia Hills, an unusual feat for a high school football coach. Vestavia's 14-3 win over Hewitt-Trussville High School on Sept. 12 brought his career record to 310-126-0, surpassing the previous record of 309-126-3 set by retired Fayette County Coach Waldon Tucker, according to the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA). Anderson has been Vestavia's head coach for 37 years and was inducted into the AHSAA Hall of Fame in 2003.

Anderson credits his parents for laying the spiritual groundwork that led to his decision to commit his life to Christ at a revival service when he was 8 years old.

Even at that early age, sports were important to him.

"I remember talking to my mom the night I got saved, and she said, 'Maybe God has a plan for you in sports,'" Anderson recalled.

A few years later the three-sport high school senior told his dad, Dovey, a 31-year high school coach and 1991 inductee into the AH-SAA Hall of Fame himself, that he felt God calling him to be a Christian coach.

"I had been praying for years to find what God wanted me to do, and that night I became convinced that God wanted to me to coach," he said.

Teaching degree

After graduating from Thomasville High School, Anderson earned his teaching degree at Samford University in Birmingham, where he played football. He was hired to teach at Vestavia in the fall of 1972.

Anderson said his faith has been an important part of his coaching philosophy throughout his career. He credits "a lot of great coaches, a lot of great kids and a great community" for his success, but he said it would not have happened without God's providence. He recalled three specific times when he especially saw God's hand at work.

The first happened during his senior year of college. He and his wife, Linda, attended a game between Mountain Brook High School and Vestavia, after which Linda, a Mountain Brook grad, described feeling a "pull" toward Vestavia.

That spring, when Anderson began looking for a job, a friend suggested Vestavia and a former coach set him up with an interview with then head coach Thompson "Mutt" Reynolds. The interview was unusual, Anderson said, because Reynolds never asked him how much he knew about offense or defense. Instead he asked him what his plans were. Anderson didn't hesitate.

"He asked me what I thought I wanted to be doing in 10 years. I told Coach Reynolds that God had called me to be a coach, so in 10 years I wanted to be a high school coach. So he hired me," Anderson said.

A few years later Vestavia had experienced several coaching changes and Anderson was frustrated because he knew how difficult such inconsistency was on young athletes. During his morning devotion time he prayed about his calling, thinking that maybe coaching wasn't God's plan after all. Less than three weeks later, Anderson was named head football coach at Vestavia.

"As He had before, God said, 'Let Me handle this,'" Anderson said.

Knowing God had placed him as head coach didn't always make things easy, especially on his family, Anderson said. A coach spends a lot of hours away from home, but it is worth the sacrifice, as Linda told Birmingham's Fox 6 News after the record-setting game.

"The number of hours it takes a week (is what people don't know about). And that's okay. It's the guys that count. ... That's why we're doing this. We were called to do it. We were called to Vestavia," she said.

Though uncertain about the life of a football coach's wife at first, Linda realized what the call meant at a national Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) Conference.

"That week as I listened to more than 900 athletes singing, strong arms embracing shoulders, my eyes glistened with tears as I heard God say, 'This is why I called Buddy to be a coach, and I'm calling you too to a special ministry. I need you to support, to love, to open your home for (FCA) Huddle meetings. ... I want you to have the kind of Christian home that will be an example to young men and women,'" Linda recalled in a 1998 interview with *The Alabama Baptist*.

Anderson said he has always wanted to use the talents God has given him through coaching, and he is thankful to have had longevity and success at Vestavia.

"I never dreamed I would still be here 42 years after I started, but God has been faithful to the calling throughout," he said. ☞



Photo by Karim Shamsi-Basha

Coach Buddy Anderson and the Vestavia Hills High School football team pray following Anderson's 310th win.

Power of influence

'We must not lead according to personal preferences'

(continued from page 1)

Still "because the church is the body of Christ," Jenkins believes that "all leaders, whether clergy or laity, need to be very cautious that they are faithful to lead as God directs." Referencing James 3:1, Jenkins said, "Because of the power of influence we must not lead according to personal preferences or desires. Those who lead must do what they do for the glory of God and the good of His kingdom. We need to be continually reminded that those who teach and lead are held to a stricter standard and to a more stringent judgment."

There are distinct differences among lay leaders in the three religious traditions examined in the study. Political concerns — whether dealing with the economy, social justice or the morality of abortion, cohabitation and stem-cell research — vary by tradition.

"If lay leaders signal certain political affiliations or attitudes, others in the congregation may be more likely to consider these attitudes as 'authentic' or 'essential' attributes of the group's religious identity," researchers wrote.

Unified base

"Evangelicals have a more unified base of lay leaders than mainline Protestant and Catholics, so the rank-and-file evangelical gets a more consistent message about how to link their religious identity and belief in politics," Baylor's Martinez said. "This helps complete the picture of how evangelicals are able to achieve greater levels of political

conformity than mainline and Catholic traditions."

Chuck Ashley, adult ministry pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, agreed that lay leaders are "important in a congregation and the key to small group interaction in the church" but believes the study overemphasizes politics.

"We don't talk politics in our church; we talk about Jesus and what He has done for us and what He can do for you."

**Chuck Ashley
adult ministry pastor,
FBC Montgomery**

"I view politics as divisive," he said. "In our church, we (Republican, Democrat, Tea Party and Independent) unify around Jesus and His Holy Word and concentrate our efforts to tell others about Him and help our fellow man.

"We don't talk politics in our church; we talk about Jesus and what He has done for us and what He can do for you," Ashley said. "I think the [study] misses the main point. It's all about Jesus and His Word, and the lay leaders' role there, not ... who wields the most political clout."

Ron Madison, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, believes Sunday School teachers are not the only people in congregations who "wield significant clout when it comes to influencing decisions and positions."

Yet he said his church's tradition and his practice as a pastor have been to "focus more on moral, social and ethical issues that are perceived to transcend politics and party due to being rooted in our understanding of Scripture."

He added, "Any time a church, denomination or pastor becomes too identified with a political party, the risk is great of being unable to speak a prophetic word when necessary." (ABP, Sondra Washington contributed)



Hindu extremists resolve to kill Christians in India

BIHAR, India — In late August a Christian couple was targeted by Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Bihar state of India. They required hospital treatment after the extremists beat and publicly resolved to kill them.

A small band of men forcefully entered the home of Shri Lal Khatiyani the morning of Aug. 30 calling him and his wife pagans as they beat him, according to the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI). When Khatiyani's wife, Asha Devi, tried to intervene they called her names and hit her on the head with the handle of a sickle, EFI reported.

Later that day, about 100 Hindu extremists with clubs stood in each corner of the village and threatened to cut into pieces any Christian who tried to leave the area to file a police complaint, area pastor Laxmi Prasad said.

"The believers somehow contacted me by telephone and I immediately informed the area superintendent of police," Prasad said. Authorities that evening sent two policemen to provide protection to Christians.

On Sept. 2, after police had left the village, the extremists held a public meeting at which they resolved to kill the couple, Prasad said, adding, "The Christians are living in constant fear."

Non-Hindus have been frequently attacked since BJP took power in India on May 26.

'Clear escalation ... against Persian Christians'

KARAJ, Iran — Three pastors in Iran are facing charges that could lead to the death penalty for activities in the house-church movement in an unprecedented crackdown on converts from Islam, according to human rights groups.

Iranian authorities recently filed charges against Silas Rabbani, assistant pastor in a Church of Iran group in Karaj, for "spreading corruption on Earth," according to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). Authorities previously charged Behnam Irani, lead pastor of the church, with the same offense. Information about each pastor leaked out of Iran in early September and was reported by CSW, a freedom of religion advocacy group based in London.

Prior to charges being filed against Irani and Rabbani, the Sixth Branch of the Revolutionary Tribunal charged Abdolreza Ali-Haghejad, another a leader in the Church of Iran movement in Karaj, Aug. 3 with "warring against God."

The charges are "a clear escalation in Iran's campaign against Persian Christians," CSW Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said.



Photo courtesy of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea

Chelsea's Liberty Baptist holds note burning

Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, in Shelby Baptist Association held a note burning July 20 to celebrate the retirement of a \$3.2 million debt for its preschool and children's building. Pictured with other church members are Laura Cain (front row, left), children/preteen director; Earl Niven Sr., deacon/trustee; and Tim Cox, pastor (far right).



New Market's Oakley Baptist marks 125 years

Oakley Baptist Church, New Market, celebrated its 125th anniversary July 20.

During the service Pastor Charlie Hammons extended a welcome and acknowledged the visitors and former pastors in attendance.

Former pastor Glenn Denton delivered the message and the group Raise to Praise sang special music.

Nancy Beasley, representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the Madison Baptist Association church with a framed certificate commemorating its 125 years.

"We started the day earlier than we normally do," said Hammons, noting there was a packed house. "When the church is full it holds about 125; I'd say we had more than that."

Lunch was provided in the fellowship hall following the service, where "everyone just had a great time," Hammons said. (Julie Payne)

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Gordon Gilbreath



GILBREATH

*Whitesburg Baptist Church,
Huntsville
Madison Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: Philippians 4:13

FAVORITE HYMNS: "Amazing Grace" and "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

HOBBIES: Doing church work, Gideon work and winning people to the Lord

FAMILY STATUS: Wife of 58 years, Doris; daughter, Joy Stuckey; two granddaughters

Soul-winning is the focus of Gordon E. Gilbreath, 80, of Huntsville. A 39-year member of Gideons International, he has distributed Bibles in Panama, Puerto Rico, Nevada and in Alabama cities. He has been on short-term missions in at least six U.S. states and in eight countries on three continents and in the Caribbean. These experiences, along with day-to-day soul-winning, have allowed him to see many people ask Jesus to come into their heart to be their Savior. He is a deacon, greeter and usher in his church, as well as a member of the missions council. Through the years he taught Sunday School, sang in the choir and served as chairman of deacons; twice he was Alabama state chaplain for Gideons International. Gilbreath operated a home repair business for 35 years. Currently he is a courtesy driver for the Ray Pearman Lincoln dealership in Huntsville.

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

A: School let out for the children to go to revival services. I was saved when I was 12 years old. It was at Sylvania Baptist Church on Sand Mountain. A Mrs. Stone told a 12-year-old boy how to accept Jesus into his heart. I've never regretted a minute of it.

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

A: It was when I was going to Heritage Baptist Church

in Huntsville. Lee J. Hudson was my pastor. I worked with JCPenney at the time. He disciplined me on how to win people to the Lord.

Q: What does the ministry work demand?

A: Just being faithful to the Lord, the church and to the Gideon ministry.

Q: What do you get from the ministry work?

A: Joy, contentment. It's always a joy to get to serve the Lord and lead somebody to Christ.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My family is wholeheartedly for me, totally. My wife is a prayer warrior. My daughter and my grandchildren pray for me. My whole church family prays when I go on a trip.

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

A: I will be serving the Lord the best I can until He calls me home. I see no place to quit. There are too many people who are lost and need Jesus.

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

A: If the Lord gives me health and strength, I will continue to serve Him.

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

A: Everything. Everything. I would probably be in trouble somewhere if it had not been for Him saving me as a 12-year-old boy. 🙏

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.

'Cold-Case Christianity'

Former cold-case detective uses skills to explain his faith

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

There are no living eyewitnesses. The physical evidence has long since disappeared, rotted or been stolen, and it's been years since the events occurred. Since Christ walked the earth more than 2,000 years ago the physical evidence Christians have today to prove Christ was real. His resurrection occurred and He is the only way to heaven are similar to the lack of evidence a detective may have in a cold-case homicide.

At least that's how J. Warner Wallace sees it. He spent 26 years of his life working as a cold-case homicide detective with the Los Angeles Police Department and was an atheist before he chose to follow Christ at age 35.

In his book "Cold-Case Christianity," Wallace explores how Christians can take the same skills a cold-case detective uses while investigating a crime to first understand and then explain one's faith.

In fact, that's how he became a Christian.

His father was an atheist so Wallace followed in his father's footsteps. Neither Wallace nor his father was opposed to Christianity; they just didn't believe. Wallace's wife, a cultural Catholic, wanted to raise their children in church so he agreed to go with his family to services but was not interested in God.

While attending a worship service at a nearby evangelical church Wallace took note when the pastor "sold Jesus as a smart, ancient, wise sage."

"I was interested in any kind of wisdom of ancient times," Wallace recalled. He began reading the Bible to find out more about this "wise sage."

"As I read through the Bible I saw the red letters of Jesus and quickly realized that someone had written that," Wallace said. "Someone thought those events were real things happening at some point. ... They were eyewitnesses. ... I had to learn to assess what I was reading and thought I would put the words to a test. If it didn't pass the test then I could walk away."

For six months Wallace was hesitant to accept the facts he was adding up in his head but eventually found the words of the Bible to be reliable. He struggled some with the reliability of the resurrection, however.

"This is the most unreliable aspect; the most outrageous aspect. ... Your presupposition will lead your understanding of things. I had to really test my own presuppositions ... and ask myself if I was keeping myself from believing (the resurrection) because it was a miraculous event."

After testing the facts using the same skills he used in his profession, Wallace accepted Christ. He continued to attend church and grow in his faith. Later he

earned a master's degree in theological studies from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.

Since retirement earlier this year, Wallace spends much of his time encouraging other Christians to examine their faith and to be able to explain Christianity to others as 1 Peter 3:15b urges, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

In early September, Wallace spoke at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Briarwood Christian School and Southeastern Bible College, all in Birmingham; Kingwood Christian Church, Alabaster; and Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. He was brought in by Tactical Faith, a nonprofit ministry based in Birmingham that seeks to "bridge

the gap between apologetics/theology training and local churches." Tactical Faith also organized a shooting tournament with Wallace at Hoover Tactical Firearms.

On Sept. 8, Wallace spoke with police officers from the Homewood Police Department, University of Alabama at Birmingham security and Shelby County Police Department at a luncheon held at Dawson Memorial Baptist.

"We're a great minority of believers in law enforcement," Wallace told the officers. "But as Christians we have a great advantage ... of experiencing things that most of the world doesn't

get to experience. And our Christian worldview allows us to see humans differently. With the level of evil we see ... at some point you have to reconcile it in your head — you can still be a believer and still see all the terrible (things) that we see."

Wallace encouraged the men to use their professional skills and the respect they receive as police officers to further the kingdom of Christ and defend their faith.

'High regard for evidence'

"As police officers we have a high regard for evidence. We know how to put a case together," Wallace said. "If you're in this profession and a Christian, you can communicate how to build a case for faith. We should be leading the way as defenders of Christ because we've already been trained on how to use evidence. ... You need to be making a case for Christ."

Homewood's police chief Jim Roberson attended the luncheon and said Wallace "made a good analogy between cold cases and criminal cases and the cold-case evidence of our faith."

"I've never thought of it in that context before," Roberson said. "There are no eyewitnesses around today that saw Jesus turn water into wine, bless and multiply the fish and raise Lazarus from the dead. ... But Wallace reminded us to not be ashamed to share our faith." 🙏



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Former Los Angeles Police Department detective J. Warner Wallace (left) speaks with local law enforcement during a luncheon held Sept. 8 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 100, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BESSEMER

► **Pleasant Ridge Church, Hueytown**, has called **Bob Terry**, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, as interim pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **John Woods** is the new music and worship pastor for **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**. He holds a bachelor of music in church music and a master of music in church music with an emphasis in choral conducting from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a master of divinity in theology from George W. Truett Seminary



WOODS

in Waco, Texas. He previously served as music and worship pastor for Northside Church, Victoria, Texas. He and his wife, Lindsay, have two children. Gary Fenton is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Nances Creek Church, Jacksonville**, will host a revival Sept. 28–Oct. 1. Services will be Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday–

Wednesday at 7 p.m. Greg Davis will speak. Garry Brown is pastor.

CLEBURNE

► **Chulafinnee Church, Heflin**, will hold revival Oct. 5–8. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Special singers will perform in each service and will include Hope's Journey on Monday. Philip Morris is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Park Avenue Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival Sept. 28–Oct. 1. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 7 p.m. Sam Self will speak. For information call 334-347-8264. Leon Adams is pastor. ► **Robert Davis**, former pastor of **First Church, Elba**, died Aug. 18. Davis served as pastor for First, Elba, from 1972–1977. Prior to First, Elba, he served on staff at First Church, Birmingham, and Dauphin Way Church, Mobile. He also served as pastor of churches in Florida and was pastor emeritus of First Church, Lake City, Fla., at the time of his passing.

CONECUH

► **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 5, 10:30 a.m. Former

pastor Hughie Denton will speak and Stanley Bullock, former minister of music, will be the guest musician. Lunch will follow. Jim O. Griffin is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host The 39er's C.L.U.B. (Christians Living Under the Blood!) nondenominational luncheon Oct. 14, 11 a.m. Kim Tate will present a musical concert. For reservations call 334-684-9617 by Oct. 7. Mike Shirah is pastor.

JUDSON

► **Sardis Church, Abbeville**, will celebrate its 165th homecoming Oct. 5, 9:45 a.m. The Emerald Coast Chorale from Panama City, Fla., will perform during the service. Lunch will follow. George Bryan is pastor.

MORGAN

► **East Highland Church, Hartselle**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 5, 9:15 a.m. Lunch will follow. For information call Betty Drinkard at 256-773-4157. Walter Blackman is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Crossroad Church, Hueytown**, will host the Crossroad Baptist Craft Market on Oct. 18, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. All vendors and anyone interested in setting up a booth should contact Tanya Counts at twcounts@bellsouth.net to request an application. All applications are due by Oct. 3. Allen Drew is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Siluria Church, Alabaster**, will host One Voice in concert Sept. 28, 5 p.m. For information call 205-663-7904. Michael Brooks is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **First Church, McIntosh**, will celebrate its 61st homecoming Oct. 5, 10 a.m. Jerry Starling, former pastor, will speak. Lunch will follow. John Stone is pastor.

OTHER

► Members of the former **Mount Moriah Fellowship Church**, located on Mount Moriah Drive on the Butler-Wilcox county line, will celebrate homecoming called Second Sunday on Oct. 12, 11 a.m. George M. Farnell, Community of Christ evangelist, will speak. Lunch will follow (bring a covered dish and serving pieces). The Mount Moriah Steering Committee will meet in the sanctuary at 1:15 p.m. The JGD Trust Inc. meeting will be at 1:45 p.m. For information call 205-879-7849 or email maryalice@carmichael1.com. ☪

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

West Side minister follows in his father's footsteps

For Jared Holland, who recently became part-time minister of music for West Side Baptist Church, Jacksonville, the phrase "following in your father's footsteps" has literally played out in his life and ministry.

Tom Holland, Jared's father, has served in churches across the state in part-time minister of music positions and recently retired from the same position at West Side Baptist.



TOM & JARED HOLLAND

Tom earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Jacksonville State University and a master's in music education from the University of Montevallo. He then served in part-time roles at First Baptist Church, Sumiton; First Baptist Church, Dora; Westside Baptist Church, Jasper; Oak Park Baptist Church, Huntsville; and Gladeview Baptist Church, Anniston, among others.

Jared also earned a bachelor's degree in music from Jacksonville State. He later earned a master's degree in school administration from the University of Alabama.

While Tom served in music ministry he worked as a band director at high schools across the state including Dora High School, Lee High School in Huntsville and Weaver High School until he retired in 2002.

And Jared now works as the band director at Weaver High, where his father retired.

West Side's pastor Ken Phillips said, "It has been a blessing and joy to serve in the ministry with Tom Holland."

And as Tom retired earlier in 2014, "the church and choir at West Side warmly received Jared's leadership ... and invited Jared to fill the position," Phillips said.

Tom and his wife, Colleen, have three children and 10 grandchildren. The couple now sings in the choir at West Side and Tom said he hopes that although he is retired, he and Colleen can "make a difference in church members' lives, the lives of other people in our community and try to make the Lord's work vibrant and even fun." (Neisha Fuson)

Fincher retires from church he helped plant

Larry Fincher, who helped plant Pleasant Springs Baptist Church, Huntsville, in his own home in 1974 before it was even established as a church, retired Aug. 31 after serving as the Madison Baptist Association's bivocational and full-time pastor for a total of 34 years.

Fincher attended Athens State College and served a term in the United States Air Force. After his military term ended he attended the University of Alabama in Huntsville before serving as the minister of music for Central Baptist Church, Huntsville, where his father was pastor.

Fincher also served as minister of music for Locust Grove Baptist Church, New Market, and Westlawn Baptist Church, Huntsville. He served as pastor of then First Baptist Church, Toney (now Harmony Baptist Church, Toney), before serving as the minister of music, then bivocational pastor and finally full-time pastor of Pleasant Springs Baptist.

"I believe ministry is a calling, not a vocation," Fincher said of his time serving churches in the state.

Fincher led Pleasant Springs through three building projects and helped them organize their funds to become debt free by the end of this year.

He also served as moderator for Madison Association and currently serves on the association's personnel committee.

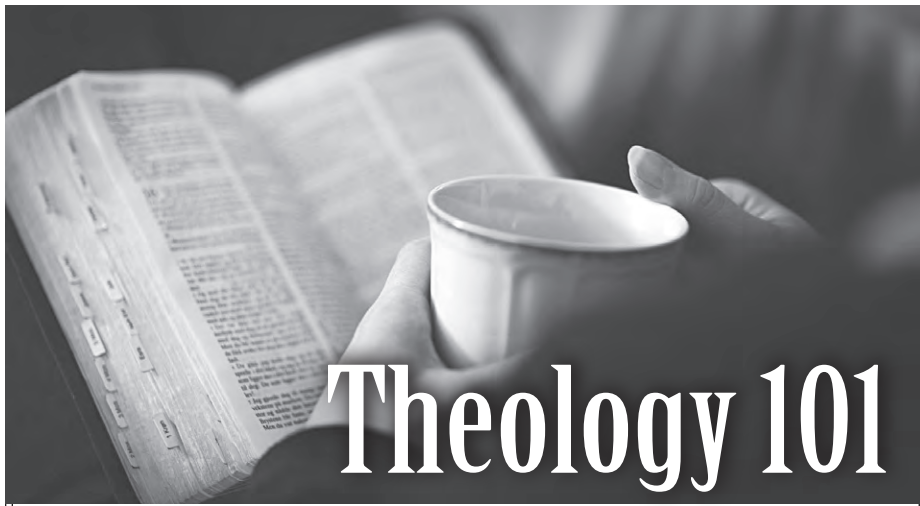
Fincher and his wife, Sherry, have one son. They are moving to Louisville, Ga., and Fincher said he plans to continue ministry in Georgia and is "looking forward to reaching different cultures in that area." (Neisha Fuson)



FINCHER

REFLECTIONS





Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Living

Walking Differently (Part 1 of 2)

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

Walking is an apt illustration for thinking about the Christian life. Walking implies the presence of life. As Christians, we are in possession of spiritual life — life abundant and life everlasting. Walking suggests steady progress a step at a time, as opposed to movement by riding or flying. As Christians, our progress in Christlikeness is not instantaneous, but gradual. The Bible refers to this theologically as sanctification. Last week we thought about walking worthily, based on the first half of Ephesians 4.

This week we begin looking at the Christian life as walking differently, based on the last half of Ephesians 4. The first of two measuring sticks of a life that is different is that we are to walk differently from unconverted outsiders. The second half of Ephesians 4 begins with verse 17, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.” Two implications are immediately apparent. At one time we Christians did walk as do unconverted outsiders for we too were unconverted. The further implication, which is more than an implication but a direct statement, is that we should no longer live as non-Christians are living. Hence we are to be walking differently.

First century Gentile life

The measuring stick for gauging how differently we are living is given in terms of several descriptive phrases about the unconverted life. These phrases offer a cross-section of first century Gentile life. The picture is a

composite of various aspects of an unconverted life. Each of the five may not have been equally true of any one person but found in varying degrees from one person to the next. A somewhat similar cross-section could be taken of 21st century society.

The first descriptor about outsiders holds that they are futile in their thinking (Eph. 4:17). Without God, a person’s thoughts may be lofty and ambitious in the world’s eyes but aimless and empty so far as pleasing God and gaining His acceptance are concerned. Unconverted persons might be brilliant intellectuals, but at the end of their way they will be without God and without hope of eternal life.

Living without the light of God

Related to this is the declaration that they are “darkened in their understanding” (Eph. 4:18a). The unsaved outsider is living without the light of the knowledge of God that comes through a personal relationship with Him. Since such is no longer true of us as Christians, we are to walk differently, knowing God and being known by Him.

Furthermore the person who has never come into a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ is living in separation from the life of God. What an unconverted world may describe as “living it up” is really dying spiritually. Such a plight is attributed in part to ignorance and in part to hardness of heart (Eph. 4:18b). Walking differently means that we demonstrate daily a personal relationship with God within which we are getting to know Him better and better.

The unconverted world in any century gives evidence of people living in sensuality, impurity and lust (Eph. 4:19). Christian living is not to be characterized by such behavior. We are to be walking differently, according to Ephesians 4:20–21, “But that is not the way you learned Christ — assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

More next week about walking differently for a further look at the doctrine of the Christian life as one lived in contrast to an unsaved world.

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.



See You at the Pole

Students, others gather at flagpole to pray

Another start to the school year means new school supplies and fresh class schedules, reuniting with friends and maybe a different locker. But for See You at the Pole (SYATP) participants — from preschool-age to college — it also means a time to intercede in prayer for the world, community leaders, schools, staff and families.

SYATP, a student-initiated, student-led movement, began in 1990 when one youth group in Texas gathered to pray at several schools in the community.

This year’s 24th annual SYATP was Sept. 24 and corresponded with the Global Week of Student Prayer which encourages students to find new and unique ways, places and times to pray throughout the week.

As in years past millions of students around the globe participated in SYATP. They gathered at their school’s flagpole in the morning to pray with the 2014 SYATP theme in mind — NEVER STOP PRAYING — pulled from Ephesians 6:18, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be

alert and always keep on praying for the Lord’s people.”

Matt Wilson, executive director of First Priority Greater Birmingham (which coordinated SYATP in Alabama), said, “This year’s theme message encourages us to put on the full armor of God, stand strong in Him and be His representatives to share the good

news of the gospel.”

Community rallies also were planned by First Priority the evening of Sept. 24 at First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove; Moody High School; First United Methodist Church, Pell City; and Corner High School. Two rallies also were held Sept. 21 at Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, and Veterans Park.

The community rallies, which included a guest speaker and music, served as a “day for unity” because students, teachers and community members gathered together for a common purpose to ask God to intercede.

“(In Scripture) Samuel connected to the Lord when he was young and stayed connected with Him his whole life,” Wilson told *The Alabama Baptist* in a previous interview. “That is what we are trying to encourage kids to do.” (Neisha Fuson)



File photo

Butler Association helps build church



Photo courtesy of Butler Baptist Association

Butler Baptist Association Director of Missions Allen Winn (center, left) presents Pastor Reginald Williams of Bible Baptist Church, Georgiana, with a check for \$25,000 as members of several local Baptist churches look on. This check represents only part of the almost \$40,000 given toward Bible Baptist’s construction of a new building this summer.

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

I would ask, however, that Dr. Madison remember that the Great Commission comes from God — the Cooperative Program was created by man.

I have no doubt in my mind after sitting under David Platt's leadership for years that God led him to the International Mission Board (IMB).

My family and I will miss him but we desire for him to be in God's will, and we believe that he is.

The IMB is receiving a blessing. Let's not question such a blessing.

Carla Joiner
Birmingham, Ala.

MORE ON PLATT

Thank you for your faithfulness in printing so many articles and Bible studies that truly encourage Baptists in our walk with God.

For the first time that I can remember, you printed a guest editorial that was negative — "My Reason for Not Endorsing David Platt as IMB President" by Ron Madison, page 6, Sept. 11 issue.

It truly put the election of

David Platt to the position of International Mission Board (IMB) president in a disparaging light.

In contrast, I was delighted to see Jay Wolf's guest editorial the previous week (page 2, Sept. 4) encouraging Dr. Platt and all of us regarding the reasons he supported Dr. Platt's election.

I'm sure Dr. Wolf gave an accurate reflection of the convictions of the overwhelming majority of votes that were cast for Dr. Platt.

Perhaps you printed the most recent editorial to present the "other side" of this election. But I don't understand your reasoning for publishing Dr. Madison's guest editorial, because his views represent a very small percentage of voters.

Even though Dr. Platt didn't support the Cooperative Program to the extent others perhaps felt he should have in the past, he nevertheless intends to correct that mistake in the future.

Dr. Madison also mentioned that he didn't know how Dr. Platt would correct his "failure" since he will not be leading a local church.

But the president of the IMB would have significant influence over the local churches' support of missions, does he not?

Even though I haven't had the opportunity to know the specifics of Dr. Platt's plan, I know I can trust God to give him success as he leads our missions effort

because of his obvious desire to make Jesus known to the world.

My concern with the publication of this editorial is the negative light it casts on someone who was overwhelmingly chosen to lead.

Eleanor McElvy
Montgomery, Ala.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

We want to remind the readers of *The Alabama Baptist* that it is time to get your Christmas cards ready for prisoners here in Alabama.

In the beginning we sent them to Limestone Correctional Facility where inmates with HIV/AIDS were housed. Now that they are more integrated into the general prison population, the cards will go to the facilities where there are some HIV/AIDS inmates.

Cards may be donated by individuals, groups and children's groups. You can select new cards or make them.

Sign and place in an envelope, but do not seal and do not provide your address on the individual cards.

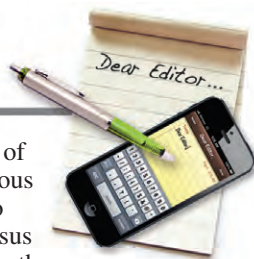
Cards do not need individual postage on them. You may include a Bible verse or encouraging note. Cover them with prayer as you get them together.

Remember no gift is too small to send. We have never gotten a box with too many cards. Let your ability to send the cards guide how many you send.

Thank you so much for caring and helping with this project.

Deliver or mail to MAC D Ministries, c/o Scarlett Dunnam, 4030 6th St. East, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404, to arrive by Dec. 3. You can email adunnam4030@comcast.net or call 205-553-1592.

Scarlett Dunnam
Tuscaloosa, Ala. 🙏



About Alabama
BY JIM WILLIAMS
jwillia@samford.edu

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

Improving Public Services in Urban Areas

Perception often trails reality, and that's the way it is with Alabama's urban development. We tend to think of our state as the small, rural place that it once was — but is no longer. As a result, we haven't paid enough attention to modernizing the way local public services are financed, organized and delivered.

Alabama is no longer a small state; it has 4.8 million residents, which ranks 23rd among the 50 states. Rural areas remain, but 70 percent of us live in the 11 urbanized metropolitan areas of the state. Suburbanization and the lengthy journey to work tie these metropolitan counties together and complicate the ability to provide effective and economical public services.

For example, the city of Birmingham has 216,000 residents but draws another 94,000 commuters into work every day. This means its daytime population is 43 percent greater than the number of residents. The same workday increase occurs in Montgomery (+18 percent), Mobile (+22 percent) and Huntsville (+27 percent), as well as in the smaller metropolitan central cities. The counties that contain these central cities also gain population during the workday. On the other hand, suburban cities and counties, where many commuters live, lose population during working hours.

Commuters as well as residents use the roads, drink the

water and benefit from police and fire protection in both kinds of communities. To complicate matters further, counties as well as cities provide law enforcement, roads, parks and other kinds of services. Commuters vote only in the city and county where they live, not where they work. Without some kind of regional solution, it is easy to see how services can be duplicated or misdirected, leaving needs unmet.

Regional solutions

In other states, two kinds of regional solutions have been tried. One is to consolidate city and county governments, creating an area-wide arrangement in which everyone is represented and pays taxes based on services received. This approach has been successful in such cities as Nashville, Louisville and Jacksonville, among others.

Consolidating particular services is a more limited approach. A common step is to rationalize law enforcement services, which normally are provided by the county sheriff as well as city governments. In Charlotte, N.C., for example, the Mecklenburg County Sheriff maintains jails and serves the courts, while a consolidated Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department is responsible for crime-fighting.

Alabama's urban areas would benefit from considering these kinds of regional solutions to the problems caused by population growth. 🙏

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

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

What is reverse mortgage?

By Jimmy Dixon

A reverse mortgage is a loan sponsored by the U.S. Government that enables senior homeowners (62 and older) to convert part of the equity in their homes into tax-free money or pay off an existing mortgage. Increasingly, older homeowners are using reverse mortgages to supplement their retirement incomes, pay for health care, make home improvements and create cash reserves for emergencies.



Jimmy Dixon

in your home. You may qualify even if there is an existing mortgage on your home.

How much you can get depends on a few factors, including your age, the value of your home, the amount of equity in it and interest rates.

There are several options available for how you receive the money from a reverse mortgage. You can receive the money in an upfront lump sum, a line of credit, fixed monthly amounts or a combination of options.

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy Dixon covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is Bible study director and a deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.

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Diversity *in* churches



US churches feel beat of change according to study

Churches are changing — in worship/gathering styles, in leadership requirements, in associating with a denomination and in acceptance of gays — according to the most recent National Congregation Study (NCS) released Sept. 11.

The study's latest look at the country's churches, synagogues and mosques — the third wave of studies that began in 1998 — finds more congregations:

- ▶ Open their doors to gays and lesbians in active membership and in leadership.

- ▶ Show racial and ethnic diversity in the pews.

- ▶ Encourage hand-waving, amen-shouting and dancing-in-the-aisles during worship.

- ▶ Disconnect from denominational ties, doctrines and rules that might slow or block change.

Updated data

The study draws on interviews with leaders at 1,331 nationally representative congregations (70-plus) and updates data from 1998 and 2006 studies.

Non-Christian congregations

were included in the study but there are too few for statistical analysis by topics.

Duke University sociology professor Mark Chaves, who directed the study, said he was "surprised" by how much the acceptance of gays and lesbians has risen since 2006, the first time the study asked about gay involvement in religious congregational life.

Congregations that "permit full-fledged membership for openly gay or lesbian couples in a committed relationship" climbed to 48 percent in 2012, up from 37 percent in 2006.

Most congregations still draw a line at permitting gays to take leadership positions, though the number of congregations allowing gays in leadership is rising; it stands at 26 percent, up from 18 percent.

A look by regions shows this liberalization roughly mirrors the state-by-state legalization of same-sex "marriage," which began in New England then swept down to the mid-Atlantic and west to California by 2012.

Nearly 1 in 4 congregations — or 23 percent — described themselves as nondenominational, up from 18 percent in 1998.

The standout exception: Only about 4 percent of white conservative evangelical or fundamentalist churches permit gays in leadership roles.

For women, however, there is no statistical progress in the NCS study. Despite a handful of recently named women senior pastors, the percentage of congregations with women in the top post has been locked at roughly 11 percent since 1998. America's largest religious groups — Catholic, Southern Baptist and Mormon churches — do not ordain women or allow them to lead congrega-

tions.

In regard to diversity the study found in 2012 that 11 percent of congregations had an all-white membership, down from 20 percent in 1998. About a third of congregations have some Hispanics and nearly a quarter have some Asians.

Ethnic diversity

In an issue of the "Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion," Chaves wrote: "We do not want to overstate the significance of this increasing ethnic diversity within American congregations. Eighty-six percent of American congregations (containing 80 percent of religious service attendees) remain overwhelmingly white or black or Hispanic or Asian or whatever."

The NCS also found distinctive religious denominational brands are losing congregational market share. Nearly 1 in 4 congregations — or 23 percent — described themselves as nondenominational, up from 18 percent in 1998. Nondenominational churches can have greater leeway in leadership, teachings and style of worship.

The trend toward informal, entertaining and exuberant worship services, first marked in 1998, continues to climb, the study found.

More people now attend congregations where drums are played during the main service — up to 46 percent in 2012 from 25 percent in 1998. Every tradition from Catholic to Protestant to non-Christian pumped up the beat by 7 to 20 percentage points or more.

Eighty percent of people attending black Protestant congregations reported that people jump, shout or dance during the main service, up from 66 percent in 1998.

And this worship-in-motion trend is increasingly true for people who attend white evangelical conservative or fundamentalist congregations (25 percent, up from 16 percent in the first study).

Other groups — particularly people who worship at white moderate or liberal churches and Catholics — still keep to their seats.

Although more people attend services where worshippers raise their hands during the main service (59 percent in 2012, up from 48 percent in 1998), all the increase was among Protestants, conservative or liberal.

'Religious experience'

However, James Martin of *America* magazine observed, enthusiastic worship is growing among Catholics in ethnic congregations where the service "has a different cultural flair. You might see something very different at a Hispanic Mass in Los Angeles than on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. It's more a cultural divide than a religious one."

But Chaves wondered if all the spontaneous expressions of enthusiasm during worship affects the religious message. He speculates that there is "more emphasis on generating a kind of religious experience as opposed to teaching religious knowledge or doctrine."

Hardly, countered Marcia McFee, a worship consultant and speaker who coaches church leaders. She works with mainline denominations and churches on enhancing their services with light, sound and motion.

The Christian message should be a "deeply rich sensory experience," said McFee, so people "can embody that which we proclaim." (RNS)

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Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago September 1964

Long History: Dedication services for the new auditorium of First Baptist Church, Dadeville, were held Sept. 6. Leon Macon, editor of *The Alabama Baptist* and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, brought the message of dedication at the 11 a.m. service. First, Dadeville, was constituted in 1838. This is its third location and fifth auditorium. Murray Seay is the pastor.

40 Years Ago September 1974

Student Center Purchased: The Alabama Baptist State Convention has purchased the Auburn Baptist Student Center property and the building and property known as the Garrett Apartments. Since its inception in 1923, the ministry of Baptist students at Auburn University has been a cooperative effort between First Baptist Church, Auburn, and the state convention.

Dotson M. Nelson Jr., president of the convention, presented a check for \$100,000 to L.M. Ware, a trustee of First, Auburn, for the purchase.

30 Years Ago September 1984

Representing Alabama: John H. Thomas, professor of religion at Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and former chairman of the Humanities Division, has just returned from a 40-day preaching and teaching mission in Southeast Asia. He is a new appointee representing Alabama on the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) of the Southern Baptist Convention.

20 Years Ago September 1994

Churches Call Staff Members: Several Alabama churches have announced the calling of new staff members. Lance Hogan has been called as pastor of Five Points Baptist Church, Northport. He formerly served at First Baptist Church, Tusculumbia. Keith Warden has been called as minister of students at Center Point First Baptist Church, Birmingham. He comes from High-

land Baptist Church, Florence. Denis Tanner has been called as minister to youth and young adults by Shades Crest Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. He comes from Austell, Ga. Dusty McLemore has been called as full-time pastor of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens. He has served as bivocational pastor of the church since 1992. Since then, the church has added an educational building and eight classrooms.

10 Years Ago September 2004

Quiet Places: Tucked into a wooded corner of the church grounds at Weatherly Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville, is a special place for prayer — a labyrinth. Christian labyrinths are rooted in 1,500 years of tradition. The labyrinth is an unconventional outreach to community members who are encouraged to walk it during daylight hours. Brochures at the entrance provide instructions for those who choose to take the walk and, if they desire spiritual direction, they need only request it from the church ministerial staff. ☞

Want to know GOD?

Pastor Terry Lolley
Big Sandy Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

Have you ever met someone who wants to know everything? Unfortunately it is impossible for us as finite beings to know everything. I have encountered people in the past who suggested that if they could get just one particular question answered then they would “consider” God. These questions can run the gamut from “Prove to me God exists” to “If there is a God why is their evil and suffering?” Honestly if these questions were answered with some degree of correctness, it is unlikely this would drastically alter their disbelief.

While there is nothing wrong with asking questions, too often we use questions to stall or avoid making a decision instead of coming to grips with the answers God has already provided through the Bible. For example, we all need to know the answer to the question the Philippian jailer asked of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:30), “What must I do to be saved?” The answer provided immediately was “believe in the Lord Jesus,” the only key to salvation. Jesus Himself asked the disciples in Mark 8, “Whom do you say that I am?” Peter gave us the answer in verse 29, “You are the Messiah.”

Those are the types of questions that people must ultimately contend with. Now there is nothing wrong with seeking honest answers to sincere questions. But are you asking questions that really matter for eternity? Or are you just postponing a decision about what you are going to do with this man called Jesus?

Your response to God has to be acceptance of His Son, Jesus Christ, as Savior. You must repent, or turn away from a life of sin and toward God, trusting by faith in Christ. Paul writes in Romans 6:23 an amazing statement that explains in just a few words the saving message of God’s grace, mercy and love: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Will you accept that gift that God offers you? It’s the answer to the question that really matters. ☞

Former Muscle Shoals youth minister waives extradition

A former Alabama Baptist youth minister arrested Aug. 20 in Texas on a warrant has returned to Alabama to face charges of sexual abuse.

Charles “Kyle” Adcock appeared Sept. 12 in Colbert County District Court in Tusculumbia. He waived extradition from Frisco, Texas, and was transferred to Alabama Sept. 10.

Adcock is charged with 22 counts of second-degree rape

and nine counts of second-degree sodomy stemming from his time as youth minister at Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals.

Police said Adcock had an inappropriate sexual relationship with a girl in the church youth group between 2010 and 2012 beginning when she was 14.

Adcock has not been employed by the church since May 2012. (ABP)

MARKET PLACE

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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.

WORSHIP & EDUCATION PASTOR: White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City, Ala. Full time. WSBC is an exciting church on the move. With an already strong, exciting and energetic worship ministry, we are seeking God’s man to propel us to the next level. For a full description of the worship and education pastor profile, please visit whitespringsbaptist.org. Send resumé to Pastor Abel: abelg1@comcast.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.

MUSIC MINISTER: Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church in Homewood is seeking a part-time music minister. Send resumés to: RABC, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 309 Raleigh Avenue, Homewood, AL 35209, or jeantowry@rabc.org.

STUDENT & FAMILY ACTIVITIES PASTOR: White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City, Ala. Part-time. We are seeking God’s next man to serve as our student and family activities pastor. For a full description of the ministry profile, please visit whitespringsbaptist.org. Email resumé to Pastor Abel: abelg1@comcast.net.

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.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES: Ooltewah Baptist Church is seeking a full-time director of children’s ministries. Mail resumé to: Children’s Ministry Search Committee, c/o OBC, P.O. Box 9, Ooltewah, TN 37363.

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

FOR SALE MOTOR HOME: 2014, 28-foot motor home with a 17-foot slideout and king bed. This is an ultra posh, gas, class A RV coach. Purchased with only 676 miles on Sept. 20, 2013, for \$93,797, but found that I had prostate cancer, then bone cancer. Now has 1,016 miles and will sacrifice for \$65,000. Call 205-516-6859.



Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

Life lessons lead me back to 'love'

The date: Sept. 24, 2009, exactly four months after her second birthday.

The report: Rare brain tumor ... malignant.

The prognosis: Bleak.

And thus began Susanna Belle Mitchell's cancer journey. We call her Belle, like the princess.

On one hand, she is indeed a princess. On the other, she is a rock star. There are few places Belle goes where she isn't known, and she achieved the one-name-only status before age 3.

She captivates you almost immediately by her smile, spirit and sassiness. Her sweet giggles and silly nature draw you the rest of the way in.

And for a time her chemo-induced bald head escalated her ability to mesmerize people.

Belle draws a crowd easily, and her friend list is long. If you've met Belle, then you are on that list. Even her "frienemy" Sara Beth is her BFF.

Belle loves people unconditionally like ... well, like Jesus. He definitely shines through her, and she is a beam of light for His glory.

I can't imagine life without Belle. I might just be her biggest fan. (I guess I have to compete with her parents and siblings and about 30 other close friends and family members, but I'd sure give them a run for their money.)

Learning from Belle

As we approached the five-year mark of Belle's cancer journey (Sept. 24, 2014), I reflected on five life lessons I've learned from Belle.

1. Mommy is impy and other Belle-invented sayings.

Be silly whenever you can and laugh a lot — A LOT. Live life to its fullest and find the joy in everything, even chemo and radiation. Love people and find the good in them. Nurture and protect your relationships.

2. Don't forget Knuffle Bunny.

Belle's go-to stuffed animal,

which travels everywhere with her, is a light-green rabbit — the main character in a series of children's books by Mo Willems. Belle received Knuffle Bunny as a gift not long after arriving at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis in 2009, and he has been by her side through the entire cancer journey.

We all need our own version of Knuffle Bunny — people who will love us no matter what and stick with us through the ups and downs. People who lift us up, make us more secure and give great hugs.

3. Don't drag the bag of IV fluids alone.

Make sure Mommy and Aunt Jen Jen are nearby to carry it for you.

Share your burdens with others and allow them the blessing of helping you carry the weight.

4. Purple Gatorade is the best. Enough said.

Do your research, make an informed decision and commit to the path. Don't look back and don't second guess.

5. "This girl is on fire."

Belle loves to sing and dance to many of today's popular songs.

She practices over and over for her performances and doesn't settle for a mediocre show. She will start over from the beginning multiple times to get it just right.

She also performs in costume and personally designs individual tickets for everyone attending the show. This girl doesn't slack.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23).

A phrase made popular in the past decade — Live. Laugh. Love. — has become a bit trite, but it describes Belle to a tee.

She truly lives life, laughs consistently and loves purely and unconditionally.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). 🙏

Rashional Extras...

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Photo by Jan White

Members of Bethany Baptist Church, Andalusia, gather at 18-year-old Megan Kelley's home to pray Sept. 17.

18-year-old Megan Kelley: 'I'll be strong ... never give up'

Back to Birmingham 18-year-old Megan Kelley went, a city the Andalusia native knows all too well because of the medical treatment she needs.

Kelley began her fight with Ewing's Sarcoma — a malignant bone tumor — in July 2013. She spent many days at UAB Medical Center getting treatments as well as feeling the side effects.

She endured losing her hair and the anxiety that comes with waiting on the results of the routine scans. And through it all she has kept a smile on her face and a fight in her heart.

One year later and with all treatments complete, Megan's scans were clear. But two months later new symptoms appeared, and on Sept. 11 she was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML).

"I'll stand and be strong, no I'll never give up, I'll conquer with love and I'll fight like a girl," Kelley posted on her Facebook page Sept. 13. And on Sept. 17, members of Kelley's church — Bethany Baptist, Andalusia — gathered at her house to pray. They have been a great support to Kelley and her family as well as to 21-year-old Bailey Byrd, who is battling Juvenile Granulosa Cell Tumor, a rare form of ovarian cancer.

"I know it is difficult to read about childhood cancer," Kelley's mother, Donna, wrote in a post on the Prayers for Megan Facebook page. "I know it isn't easy to look through photos of pale, bald-headed kids getting chemo pumped through their veins."

"I live childhood cancer every day. ... It is a part of me, a very deep part of me. It's not only about my Megan, it is about the countless other children who have fought or who are fighting now. Each one of the beautiful kids I have met will forever have a place in my heart. Each child has touched me, each one has a special spark, a beautiful spirit. ... It's been inspiring to watch them fight their battles with courage, love, hope and a smile." (Jan White, Jennifer Rash)

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month is a cause very near and dear to our heart. Having the month for awareness be September is especially meaningful to us as our daughter lost her battle with leukemia Sept. 18, 1987.

Our daughter was an amazing young woman, who at age 14 faced her illness and approaching death with an amazing grace and unwavering faith.

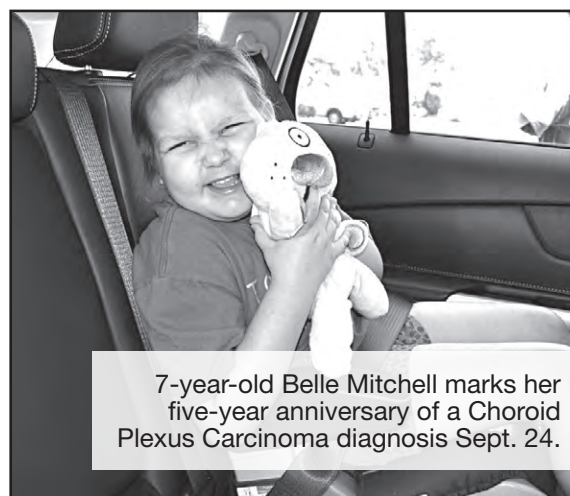
This year I published a mini ebook through Amazon that shares the lessons we learned from our daughter as she took that difficult journey — "Finish Well: Lessons I Learned From My Daughter's Journey Home."

Even after all these years the lessons she taught through her life and death serve us well in our daily walk.

Janice Pitchford
"FinishWell"

"I'm sorry. I'm so very sorry." Words spoken, ever so softly by a man (the surgeon) with a sympathetic heart, had just turned our world upside down."

Fred G. Womack
"Kim: A Dying Child's Spiritual Legacy"



7-year-old Belle Mitchell marks her five-year anniversary of a Choroid Plexus Carcinoma diagnosis Sept. 24.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

September
is Childhood
Cancer
Awareness
Month.



Photo by Bill Mathews

Judson College seniors stand on the steps of Jewett Hall on Rose Sunday on Sept. 7.

Rose Sunday

Judson College celebrates 99 years of tradition

It happens the first Sunday of every fall semester at Judson College in Marion — Rose Sunday — and it occurred again for the 99th time Sept. 7.

Rose Sunday is the traditional start of the academic year and it was first celebrated Sept. 19, 1915. The event also symbolizes the close relationship between Judson and Siloam Baptist Church, Marion.

This year's Rose Sunday preparations started Saturday with Judson students weaving ivy chains to show a strong bond of sisterhood. Later that afternoon, about 300 Marion Military Institute men and women cadets marched in full uniform to the college campus for a step-sing performance and picnic.

On Sunday festivities began on campus at 9 a.m. The students, with their families and friends, gathered in Jewett Hall for picture taking, serenading and exchanging well wishes. Underclassmen then lined the walkway holding woven ivy chains in honor of the senior class. The seniors, dressed in their academic caps and gowns and wearing Judson's signature flower, the red rose, processed to Siloam Baptist led by Judson President David Potts.

At the Rose Sunday service at Siloam, as has been customary, Potts shared stories of the founders of the college. He concluded by recollecting his personal experiences with the man who employed him at the college, former Judson President N.H. McCrummen. McCrummen was inducted into the Alabama Men's Hall of Fame on Sept. 23.

Siloam pastor John Nicholson offered words of welcome and

presented the sermon. Music was provided by the Judson Singers and FAITH Ensemble, as well as solos by Camilla Horne, newly appointed head of the Music Department, and Judson student Katelyn Chastang. Musical accompaniment was provided by John Robertson, instructor of piano. Scott Bullard, vice president and academic dean, gave the invocation, and the benediction was given by Susan

Jones, vice president and dean of students.

Following the church service lunch was served in Judson's dining hall.

Judson was founded in 1838 and it is the state's only college for women. It is nationally recognized as an institution of higher education committed to "the greater good." For more information, visit www.judson.edu. (Judson)

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So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27

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SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Political Science Professor William P. 'Bill' Collins Honored:** The John H. Buchanan Award for Excellence in Classroom Teaching was awarded to William P. "Bill" Collins by Samford President Andrew Westmoreland during the opening fall convocation Aug. 26. Finalists for the award were nominated by members of the Class of 2014.



COLLINS

Westmoreland described Collins as a teacher who students instantly recognize as a great educator.

"Students frequently remark on his ability to encourage intellectual curiosity and to discuss Plato and Aristotle so naturally that one suspects he walked with them at the Academy in Athens," Westmoreland said.

Collins joined Samford's Howard College of Arts & Sciences faculty in 1987.

Collins, who is also known for his quiet, thoughtful and humble demeanor, said the award is a great

honor for which he is deeply appreciative.

He earned his bachelor's and doctoral degrees from Florida State University and served as a Navy intelligence officer in the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam years.

"Intellectual curiosity is not a vain activity. Rather it is a kind of an ongoing awakening," Collins said. "Being at Samford and working to get that process underway has been a marvelous joy for me and I view this award as recognition of that fact."

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Voices of Mobile Featured on In Touch Ministries International Broadcast:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) vocal ensemble Voices of Mobile is featured on the internationally broadcast television program "In Touch with Dr. Charles Stanley."

Their performance of "Rise Again" began airing for a week starting Sept. 19. To find broadcast times and stations, go to intouch.org/broadcast/find-a-station.

► **New Faculty Join the University of Mobile:** The University of Mobile welcomed 14 new faculty members to campus for the 2014-2015 academic year.

New faculty are: Randy Craig, associate professor of biology;

Lori DeLong, associate professor of HPES; Kadisha Onalbayeva, associate professor of music; Lesley Baggett, assistant professor of biology; Karen Dennis, assistant professor of education; Miguel Echevarria, assistant professor of Christian ministries; Cynthia Erickson, assistant professor of education; Rebekah Morrow, assistant professor of biology; Jamie O'Mally, assistant professor of psychology; Jeremy Padgett, assistant professor of communication; James Adams, instructor in mathematics; Amanda Coggin, instructor in nursing; Rachael Counselman, instructor in English; and Jamie Harvill, worship leadership artist-in-residence.

► **University of Mobile Center for Adult Programs Holds Preview Sessions:** The Center for Adult Programs (CAP) at the University of Mobile (UMobile) will host preview sessions for adults interested in beginning or completing a college degree in the areas of business administration, early and elementary childhood education, leadership and cultural studies and RN-to-BSN nursing program.

The next preview sessions will be held Sept. 29, 30 and Oct. 2 from 6-7:30 p.m. and Oct. 4 from 9-10:30 a.m. To sign up for one of four upcoming preview sessions, contact the UMobile CAP at 251-442-2558 or email cap@umobile.edu.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Announces Equestrian Team Rosters:** Judson College's Equestrian Teams' rosters for the 2014-2015 show season are: the Western Team — Mary Kilpatrick, junior, of Dothan, and Rylee Parnell, senior, of Tibbie. Joining the team are Emily Dickerson, sophomore, of Madison; Daphne Arrington, senior, of Roanoke; Alexandria Huber, sophomore, of Mechanicsburg, Penn.; and Katie McQuaig, junior, of Cumming, Ga. The Huntseat Team — Alexandria Huber, sophomore, of Mechanicsburg, Penn.; Sheila Palmer, sophomore, of Hoover; Katie McQuaig, junior, of Cumming, Ga.; Veronica Primavera, junior, of Deatsville; Katelyn Vanhoozer, senior, of Waco, Texas; Sara Alsabrook, freshman, of Centreville; Savannah Mashburn, freshman, of Montgomery; Candace Paige, freshman, of Gadsden; and Tiffani Pitts, freshman, of Montgomery.

The Western Team's season will start with a show at the University of North Georgia on Sept. 27. 🏇

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Dave Miller

Community Baptist's Miller dies at 66

Dave Miller, associate pastor and minister of worship for Community Baptist Church, Maylene, for more than 10 years, died Sept. 15. He was 66.



MILLER

Miller, an Illinois native, earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham in 1970 and a juris doctorate from the University of Alabama in 1977. He also took courses in worship studies through New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Miller worked in several roles throughout his life including in television sports, as a news anchor, an attorney for about 20 years, a newspaper editor and as a graphic designer before he began serving Community Baptist. He previously served as interim minister of music for First Baptist Church, Vandalia, Ill. He also was a member of Alabama Singing Men.

According to Community Baptist pastor Bo Brown, Miller was a "gentle giant of a man and loved everyone with grace and compassion. ... He touched more hearts than ever imagined."

Miller is survived by his wife, Laurita, and two children. (Neisha Fuson)

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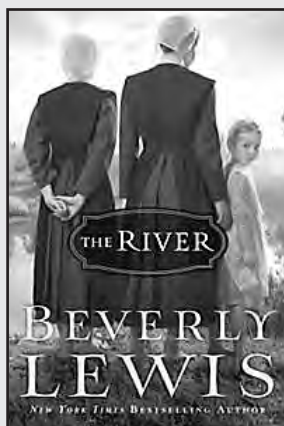
TOP 10

best-selling books from LifeWay

FICTION



1. Angels Walking
By Karen Kingsbury
(Howard)



2. The River
By Beverly Lewis
(Bethany House)



3. Somewhere Safe with Somebody Good
By Jan Karon
(Putnam)



4. The Harbinger
By Jonathan Cahn
(Frontline)

5. The Confession
By Robert Whitlow
(Thomas Nelson)

6. Bridge to Haven
By Francine Rivers
(Tyndale)

7. Little Girls Bible Storybook for Mothers and Daughters
By Carolyn Larsen
(Baker)

8. Child of Mine
By Beverly Lewis
(Bethany House)

9. Silenced
By Dani Pettrey
(Bethany House)

10. Undetected
By Dee Henderson
(Bethany House)

Source: blog.lifeway.com/christianfiction

Media reviews

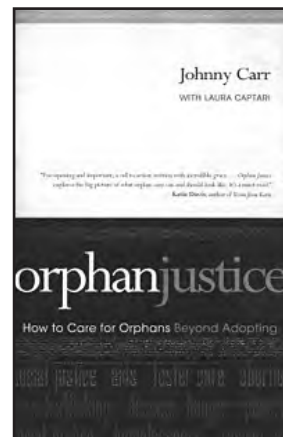


Orphan Justice: How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adopting

Johnny Carr. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013. 207 pp. (Paperback).

There seems to be a tremendous amount of interest in adoption these days; who doesn't know someone who has gone to a foreign country and come back with a child — or three or four children? Not everyone is in a position to adopt, yet the Bible speaks often of our responsibility to care for orphans. In "Orphan Justice," Johnny Carr looks at the problem of children without parents worldwide and offers practical steps that can be taken to care for them.

Of course, as an adoptive parent of three himself, Carr focuses on adoption in the book. Most of the suggestions do revolve around adopting children or supporting those who wish to adopt, but he goes farther afield to reach out to those who want to support children without adopting. At the end of each information-rich chapter is a section detailing actions anyone can do, many can do and a few can do.



The author's style is light and easy, and I found it hard to stop reading once I started, which, in my mind, defeats the purpose of a book like this. If you have more self-control than I do, you should be able to pick it up and read a selection or two, then put it down when the dryer buzzes to signal that you need to get those clothes out and fold them — now, not after you read just one more story.

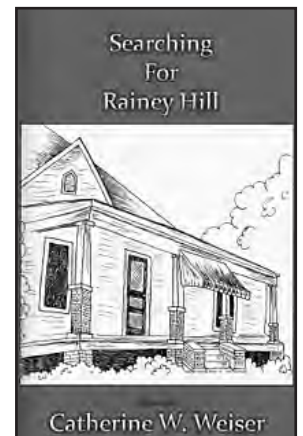
Searching for Rainey Hill

Catherine W. Weiser. Sleepytown Press, 2013. 153 pp. (Paperback).

I loved the title of this book and couldn't wait to read it. After all, the author was a fellow Alabamian, a Baptist and a former teacher, like me. Like most self-published memoirs, however, appeal for "Searching for Rainey Hill" is probably limited to friends and family of the author.

Weiser almost certainly writes the way she taught her students to write: clear, descriptive sentences, subjects and verbs in complete agreement. Her writing is easy to follow. There is little transition from one topic to another, however, which can be jarring for the reader. Many paragraphs start and stop seemingly out of nowhere, omitting the flow that a reader needs.

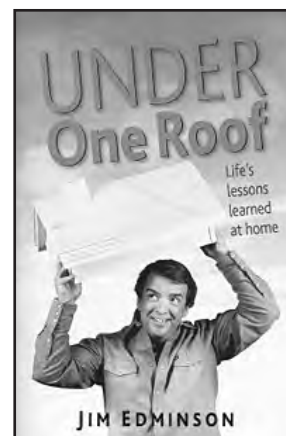
Another issue, common to books of this genre, is that it focuses on details that do not hold much interest for a stranger to the author. On the other hand, if Weiser were my aunt or my grandmother (or maybe even a beloved friend — I am sure there are many), I think I would hang on every detail, fascinated by the family history.



Under One Roof: Life's Lessons Learned at Home

Jim Edminson. North Carolina: Sweetbrier Press, 2013. 228 pp. (Paperback).

It is not surprising that a person who has worked for Baptist Children's Homes in two states would choose to write a book about family. What is a bit surprising is that the book took 18 years to write.



Actually "Under One Roof" is a compilation of columns the author wrote for a newsletter he edited. Jim Edminson relates in the preface to the book that his CEO felt it would be nice for the new editor to write regular columns, and he chose to write "about what mattered most to me — my family."

The 84 short vignettes range from poignant to fun, each with a life lesson embedded in it and a Bible verse at the end.

Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Sharp, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



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If you have a book you would like reviewed, mail a copy to:
P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640.



BP photo

Symbolizing German Baptists' complacent relationship with the Nazis, the backdrop of the speakers' platform at the 1934 Baptist World Alliance Congress in Berlin included a large swastika flag (right) alongside a cross and portraits of famous Baptists.

Failure of courage

German Baptists 'humbled' by relationship to Nazis

The 80th anniversary of a courageous stand by Christians in Germany who opposed Adolf Hitler also marks a sad chapter in Baptist history that festered four decades before Baptists voiced repentance.

In contrast to Christians who resisted Nazi evils, German Baptists "were just happy to have the regime allow them to preach the gospel within their churches," historian Albert Wardin said. "And so the German Baptists were not going to take any position that would counter any of the positions of the Hitler regime."

Meanwhile a diverse conglomeration of Christians from several denominations — called the "Confessing Church" — issued what came to be known as the Barmen Declaration, a 1934 document stating that Jesus, not Hitler, was Lord of the Church and condemning false doctrines espoused by the Nazi-controlled state church. Some declaration supporters lost their lives.

German Baptists, however, initially viewed Hitler as a champion of religious liberty and his military conquests as a providential expansion of their field for evangelism.

When Hitler and his National Socialist Party came to power in 1933 he appeared to be a friend of Christians. Secretly though, he believed Christianity was nonsense because its message of repentance and humility contradicted the National Socialist agenda of ruthlessness and strength.

But before Hitler's true beliefs were known Germany's Protestant federation agreed to establish a national church sympathetic to the Nazis.

"German Christians" — as members of the national church were called — attempted to purge Christianity of elements deemed "too Jewish."

Many professing Christians in Germany saw no incompatibility between their faith and the Nazi-controlled church. But a group of believers — including theologians Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer — recognized the errors of Nazi ideology and formed the Confessing Church to protest.

The high water mark of the Confessing Church was the Barmen Declaration. The declaration rejected the "false doctrine" of German Christians that "the State ... should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well."

But according to German theologian Erich Geldbach, "The German Baptists, in their effort to achieve social respectability and to avoid being forced into a homogenized national church, failed to recognize that they were being used."

Fraternal relations between Baptists and Nazis extended beyond a Baptist World Alliance Congress meeting in Berlin in 1934. Although German Baptists suffered persecution for 100 years before Hitler's rise, Nazis used the police to protect Baptists from harassment and granted them good locations for ministry.

But when Baptists realized Hitler's true plans and became victims of persecution themselves, the opportunity to take a meaningful stand had passed. Three Baptist pastors were sent to prison or concentration camps, according to one count, and many experienced persecution.

Individual Baptists confessed their complicity with Hitler following the war. But not until 1984 did German Baptists formally express regret that they failed to support the Confessing Church.

"Recognizing the evil at the beginning was more difficult than it appears today in retrospect," Germany's Baptists said at a European Baptist Federation Congress in Hamburg. "At that time ... there were among us those who detected the real nature of that regime, who warned against it. ... Nevertheless we did not publicly join ... the sufferings of the Confessing Church and failed to withstand more consciously the violations of divine commandments and injunctions."

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Nathan Finn said all believers should seek to emulate the Confessing Church's courage in the face of moral challenges. He cited religious liberty and defense of traditional marriage as issues on which such courage is needed today. (BP)

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

ERLC's Moore urges defense of religious liberty

WASHINGTON — Conservative Christians should recover the proper use of the term "separation of church and state" in defending religious liberty against government interference, Russell D. Moore said at an evangelical conference in the country's capital Sept. 10.

Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said one of the reasons religious liberty for all people is important is because of its value in limiting government authority.

When Americans have the kind of freedom that enables them "to argue with one another, that signals not only to the government Caesar is not God, it also signals" the same message to citizens, he said.

That is why conservatives "need to reclaim ... a term that we long ago tossed overboard — the 'separation of church and state,'" Moore said. That term "does not mean secularization," he added. "It means that the state is limited and does not have lordship over the conscience."

Conservative evangelicals have largely abandoned the use of "separation of church and state" in recent decades as strict separationists championed it in advocating for a public square largely bereft of religious presence and influence.

To defend religious freedom evangelicals need to advocate "as loudly for those issues that are irrelevant to our own as we are for those that are relevant," Moore said.

"There is no reason why a conservative evangelical ought ever to ignore a situation where a city council is zoning a mosque out of existence," he said. "Objecting to this does not mean that one is agreeing with Islam. It means that one does not believe in giving the power to the mayor and the city council to hand down theological edicts and also recognizing that those who have that power to drive people out of town on the basis of what they believe will in the fullness of time drive us all out."

Baptists encouraged to stop, pray at 10:02 on Oct. 2

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — On Oct. 2, Southern Baptists are encouraged to take time to pray for pastors and missionaries engaged in spreading the gospel worldwide. The special day, including a webcast, is part of the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) TenTwo prayer emphasis based on Jesus' call in Luke 10:2 to pray for more workers in the harvest field.

NAMB President Kevin Ezell, International Mission Board President David Platt and Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd will lead the TenTwo webcast.

The half-hour prayer webcast — to begin at 10:02 a.m. Eastern time Oct. 2 — can be viewed at www.namb.net/tentwo and will be archived for future viewing at the same site.

"There is absolutely no substitute for prayer in any facet of life," Ezell said. "Prayer is the primary, fundamental need in any missions endeavor. I would not think of taking any action without God's counsel. And TenTwo is a daily reminder that living life on mission includes praying for others as God sends them to the missions field."

To learn more about prayer support for Southern Baptists, visit www.namb.net/tentwo or www.imb.org/main/pray.

Florida Convention's Sullivan to retire in 2015

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — After serving for more than a quarter of a century, John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, announced his retirement to the Florida State Board of Missions and then gave an official statement Sept. 18 and 19 respectively.

Sullivan's retirement will be effective Feb. 28, 2015.

A nine-person search committee led by board chairman Marvin Pittman was appointed to find Sullivan's successor.

Sullivan, 77, previously served as first vice president for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC); a member of the SBC Executive Committee; on the National Task Force on Planned Growth and Giving; and SBC Parliamentarian, among other roles.

He served as pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.; First Baptist Church, Sulphur Springs, Texas; and other churches in Texas and Arizona. During his 26-year tenure in Florida, Sullivan preached more than 5,859 times in 3,067 locations. ☞