



INSIDE



Alabama Baptists minister to, help Liberians in wake of Ebola outbreak

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Lakeside Baptist to host 192nd state convention annual meeting

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More than 436,000 children in Alabama schools receive free or reduced lunch and breakfast where available, according to the Alabama State Department of Education.

Hunger in Alabama

Alabama's rate of hunger, working poor above national average

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A report released in September shows that Alabama has made little improvement in addressing hunger in the state.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released its annual report, Household Food Security in the United States 2013, on Sept. 3. The report shows that from 2011 to 2013, 16.7 percent of Alabama's 1.86 million households experienced

low or very low food security.

That percentage is slightly lower than the 17.3 percent of households reported between 2008 and 2010, though not a statistically significant drop, according to the report.

Day-to-day struggle

The USDA report defines food insecurity as "when consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year." Nationally 14.3 percent of American households are considered food insecure.

A sampling of questions used in the survey spotlights the day-to-day struggle many households face:

► In the last 12 months, did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't

enough money for food?

► In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry, but didn't eat, because there wasn't enough money for food?

► In the last 12 months, did you lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?

► In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of any of the children's meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

► In the last 12 months, were the children ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?

While the numbers do not put Alabama at the top of the list of

hungeriest states, the rate of hunger is above the national average, as is the state's number of working poor, according to the Working Poor Families Project. These figures, combined with Alabama's high poverty rate, mean many Alabama residents are feeling hopeless, said Kristina Scott,



16.7 percent of Alabama's 1.86 million households experienced low or very low food security from 2011 to 2013.

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executive director of Alabama Possible, a statewide nonprofit (See 'Collaborative,' page 3)

COMMENT

Hunger and Doing the Will of the Father

In the last teaching section of the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of final judgment. In Matthew 7:21–23, He cautioned that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus even said some who prophesy or confront evil or perform miracles will hear those dreaded words “Depart from Me, I never knew you.”

One might ask if prophesying or confronting evil or doing miracles in the Lord’s name is not enough to enter heaven, then what is.

Jesus answers “only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (v. 21).

As Baptists, our traditional understanding of doing the will of the Father relates to accepting Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. The apostle Peter was unmistakable when he wrote, “The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

God’s will is that “all should come to repentance.” God’s will is that none perish.

That is why the Father “sent His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16–17).

God even promised in 1 John 1:9 that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

‘That all could be saved’

God’s action in sending His Son is that all could be saved. God’s promise is to forgive all who confess. That part of the will of God motivates Baptists and other Christians to share the good news of Jesus with every tongue and tribe and nation so all may know that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But to stop there is to have an incomplete understanding of what the Bible says about doing the will of God.

The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10 that those who trust Christ as Lord and Savior are “God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus” for a purpose. The verse declares that purpose is “to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

In the two preceding verses the apostle clearly explains that works play no part in one’s salvation. Salvation is God’s gift alone. Then Paul adds that once an individual has become a new



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

work in Christ, that individual is to do good works that evidence the new nature or character of the believer.

Good works do not produce a new nature, the apostle teaches. They reveal the new nature.

That understanding is important when one comes to the parable of the sheep and the goats recorded in Matthew 25:31–44. In this final teaching recorded by Matthew before telling the story of the crucifixion, Jesus returned to the theme of final judgment.

Those invited into God’s kingdom were those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, sheltered the homeless, cared for the sick and visited the prisoner (vs. 35–36). Those cast out did none of those things. Evidently they ignored the needs of others.

The Greek text indicates the separation of the sheep and the goats was not an arbitrary action on the part of the king. Nor was it based on the good works of feeding the hungry or giving drink to the thirsty.

In verse 34 — “you who are blessed” — and verse 41 — “you who are cursed” — are both “perfect passive participles which express an action performed by another in the past which continues as a completed state.” In other words, something was done in the past that put them in the blessed or cursed state that continued up to the moment of judgment.

Could there be a clearer reference to God creating a new nature or character in the believer or the impact of the sinful nature in the one who rejects Jesus as Lord and Savior?

Because the sheep had a new nature, they “loved their neighbor as themselves” and cared for them in various ways. Because the highest expression of the sinful nature is selfishness, the goats ignored the needs of others. The works of each group evidenced the nature or character

each brought with them to the judgment.

The parables of Jesus and the teachings of Paul both affirm that a believer has a new nature that reveals itself in good works that bring glory and honor to God. If one’s life is not marked by “good works which God prepared in advance for us to do,” then one would be wise to revisit one’s profession of faith because profession alone is not enough.

This Sunday, Oct. 12, Southern Baptists will observe World Hunger Sunday (see story, pages 1 and 3). Alabama has a serious problem with world hunger with about 1 in 6 residents and 1 in 4 children living in food insecure homes. Thankfully a growing number of churches respond to this need with food pantries and feeding programs done in cooperation with the state’s food bank network.

ing programs done in cooperation with the state’s food bank network.

World Hunger Fund

The World Hunger Fund offering collected this Sunday underwrites feeding programs around the world. Eighty percent of every dollar goes to international food programs conducted by Southern Baptist representatives. Twenty percent of the offering is used for feeding programs in the United States.

In addition to direct ministry, it behooves Christian believers to work to create a society where people have the

opportunity to work and earn their own way rather than becoming dependent on others. This could lead Baptists into unfamiliar territory. For example, if the 1968 minimum wage had just kept pace with inflation, today’s minimum wage would be \$10.65 rather than the current \$7.25.

If wages for workers had been tied to productivity increases since 1968, the minimum wage would be an astounding \$18.30 according to the Economic Policy Institute’s analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is no wonder that both Republicans and Democrats are talking about the growing impacts of income disparity in the United States.

Traditionally Baptists have been hesitant about entering public debate about economic issues such as minimum wage. Experts agree that America cannot “food bank” its way out of the problems created by hunger. We need all the direct service churches and others can provide and we also need some basic changes in our economic system to help enable people to support themselves and their families through work.

Could creating such an opportunity be a good work God prepared in advance for us to do? 🙏

***Those invited into
God’s kingdom were
those who fed the
hungry, gave drink to
the thirsty, clothed the
naked, sheltered the
homeless ... and vis-
ited the prisoner.***

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

See page 12





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

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Hunger crisis around the world

'What will we do about that hungry person?'

By Jeff Palmer
Baptist Global Response

Several years ago, I was traveling in the southern Philippines, headed to a community where we were going to help with agricultural projects. Along the way, we passed

through a village where a prolonged drought and an armed conflict had forced several families to take refuge in a local school.

We stopped to see if there was anything we could do to help. We were overwhelmed by what we saw but did not have with us what was needed to help. When we told the people at the school that we could not help them, one of the older women said, "But what will I tell my children? We have no food."

There are nearly 1 billion people in the world today who are wondering the same thing. The majority of these are women with children. Where will they get their next meal? What will they tell their children when they come home with no food?

Isaiah says, "If you offer yourself to the

hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness" (Isa. 58:10).

James says, "If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm and eat well,' but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15, 16).

And Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat ... I assure you: Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me" (Matt. 25:35, 40).

So what will we do about that hungry person who asks what to tell their children? More importantly, what will we tell our children about what we have done for the hungry of the world?

Sunday, Oct. 12, is our Southern Baptist World Hunger Sunday. You can start praying now for the hungry of the world. And you can start praying about making a sacrificial gift through your church. Imagine what kind of statement would be made if tens of thousands of Southern Baptists gave millions of dollars through their churches to impact global hunger. Or you can contribute online at www.globalhungerrelief.com.

As you pray and give, you communicate your heartfelt concern to those who hunger as well as those who see your response. (BP)

**On World Hunger
Sunday, Oct. 12,
Southern Baptist congregations
will address the hunger crisis
across North America and
around the world by focusing
on the theme Hunger Happens
Everywhere. Donations
received are channeled through
Global Hunger Relief, which
uses 100 percent of each gift
to meet hunger needs.
For more information, visit
www.globalhungerrelief.com.**



How you can make a difference

Nearly 20 percent of Alabamians are under "food stress," said Jim Swedenburg, state missionary with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Citing a study on hunger in Alabama and reporting on October's World Hunger offering during the Alabama Baptist State Convention's Christian Life Commission fall meeting Sept. 30, he mentioned Alabama Baptists' heart for helping alleviate hunger issues.

"Our receipts last year were up 2.3 percent," he said. "This is a good sign. Twenty-five percent of this offering remains in Alabama and the remainder is distributed by the SBC (Southern Baptist Convention)."

Of the amount distributed by the SBC, 80 percent goes to international food programs conducted by Southern Baptist representatives and 20 percent is used for feeding programs in the United States.

To donate, **give through your church** by designating your contribution for the World Hunger Fund. **Or text "GHR" to 80888** to donate \$10 immediately (#worldhungersunday).

For more information, visit:
www.alsbom.org/worldhunger
www.globalhungerrelief.com
www.imb.org/worldhunger
www.wmystore.com
@globalhunger on Twitter
(Michael Brooks, www.alsbom.org)

'Collaborative efforts are the key to combatting hunger'

(continued from page 1)
organization that works to reduce systemic poverty.

"What we hear from our partners who work in food banks is that they see folks who don't have a lot of hope. They were hit hard by the recession, and their employment outlook is not changing," Scott said.

Many of these individuals did not have a lot of resources to begin with, Scott said, and now they are working less and earning less money.

"They are stuck in a pattern of living day to day without enough to support themselves, and the longer that goes on, the more desperate people feel," Scott said.

According to the USDA report, households with children under the age of 18 and those headed by an unmarried female are more likely to experience food insecurity.

Minority households and rural residents also have higher rates of poverty and hunger.

Putting kids first

In many cases, the report said, parents are able to maintain normal or near-normal diets for their children.

They can do this even if the parents themselves are food insecure, in part thanks to safety-net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supple-

mental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

The National School Lunch Program also helps. More than 436,000 children in Alabama schools receive free or reduced lunch and breakfast where available, according to the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). The ALSDE is working to increase access to summer food programs as well (see story, <http://tinyurl.com/mxqqhjc> or by searching "Alabama State Department of Education" at www.thealabamabaptist.org).

This fall, several school systems have signed up for community eligibility under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010,

and many more systems are eligible, Scott said. The advantage of community eligibility is that all children get a meal without paperwork for families and administrators.

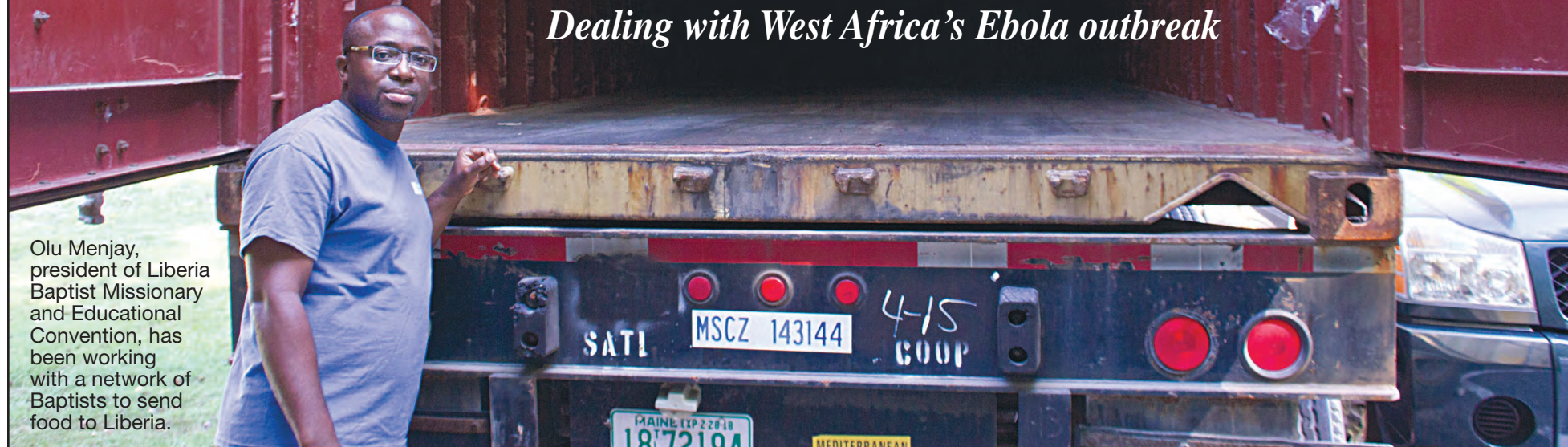
"It's one of those systemic changes that's a huge relief for parents and educators," she said.

Scott believes collaborative efforts are the key to combatting hunger because they allow limited funds to be used more effectively.

"We're never going to 'food bank' our way out of this problem," Scott said. "We must make sure people have the nutrition they need and create systems that address the root causes of hunger." ■

Unpredictable situation

Dealing with West Africa's Ebola outbreak



Olu Menjay, president of Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, has been working with a network of Baptists to send food to Liberia.

Photo by Neisha Fuson

Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention president, family make Birmingham temporary home after Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Olu Menjay's days have felt slightly different lately. What was supposed to just be a visit to the United States this summer has instead turned into a prolonged stay in Alabama for Menjay, president of Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, and his family due to the recent Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa (see stories, this page and page 5).

Now Menjay, along with his wife and two young children, have temporarily made Birmingham home with the assistance of Alabama Baptists as he helps his country of Liberia from thousands of miles away.

Menjay grew up in a Christian home in Liberia and said his father became a Christian through the influence of a Southern Baptist missionary.

"At the age of 11, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and was baptized," Menjay said of his own conversion, noting the faith influence of his Christian parents.

In the early 1990s he came to the United States where he studied at Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga., and later at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. It was while he was at Mercer, he said, that he felt called to serve in the church.

Seminary education

He applied to various seminaries and enrolled at Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C., where he spent three years in the master of divinity program.

Menjay later served about four years at Lewis Chapel Baptist Church, Fayetteville, N.C., before furthering his education at Boston University in Massachusetts.

About 10 years ago he began serving as the chief administrative officer and principal

of Ricks Institute, a K-12th grade Baptist boarding school in Monrovia, Liberia. As a result of the Liberian Civil War, which first began in 1989, the Ricks campus had been left severely damaged. "There was no running water, there was no electricity at all," Menjay recalled.

Despite the setbacks, he focused on revitalizing the institution — the school today has about 600 students.

In addition to his role at Ricks, Menjay serves as an assistant professor in the Roberts Department of Christianity at Mercer, a vice president of the Baptist World Alliance and president of the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, a position he was elected to in 2012. The convention, which is an organization consisting of more than 250 churches, is "the largest Baptist body in Liberia," Menjay noted.

The purpose of the convention "is to strengthen our churches through theological education and to foster discipleship among our churches and also to promote quality education within the country," he said. "It is a fellowship that brings Baptist sisters and brothers together."

Menjay's family had recently arrived in the U.S. for a visit. They were hoping to return to Liberia for the start of the school year in September, but because of the escalating Ebola outbreak "everything in Liberia has been interrupted," Menjay said. Businesses and schools, including Ricks, have temporarily closed down to help stop the spread of the deadly virus.

Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, has provided the Menjays a place to stay in the interim. "They have been very hospitable," Menjay said of the church's assistance.

"I'm living in what I call ... an indecisive state as it relates to returning to Liberia just now," he explained, noting he's not sure how long his family will be in Alabama "because the situation is unpredictable."

While in Birmingham, Menjay has been working with a network of Baptists to send food to Liberia during the Ebola crisis. Both he and Eddie Gibson, also a native Liberian and pastor of Brewster Road Community Church, Birmingham, have been assisting with the Help Liberia Food Drive conducted through a partnership with LIBA (Liberians in Birmingham, Alabama, Inc.) and national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Foundation (see story, page 5).

WMU partnership

"We have worked with Olu Menjay for more years than I can recall," said David George, president of WMU Foundation. "Our initial partnership began with a small grant to Ricks Institute. We were very impressed with the work there ... and we were thrilled when WMU expanded their partnership with Ricks to include an animal husbandry program that was an integral part of the school's curriculum and source of food."

George added that Southern Baptists have a longstanding commitment to Liberia. "When Olu and ... Eddie Gibson came to us with the idea of collecting food to ship to Liberia, we jumped at the opportunity."

Menjay noted he is "very, very thankful" for the ongoing assistance in this food initiative, adding that basic food for Liberians is needed during this critical time for his country.

"We are asking Alabama Baptists ... to pray for us and help us to stop hunger in Liberia," he said. ❧

Deadly Ebola virus finds its way to US

Africa is now experiencing the worst Ebola virus outbreak recorded in history since its discovery in 1976. But today it's no longer just hitting faraway places.

According to World Health Organization, the first case of Ebola was diagnosed and confirmed in a U.S. hospital Sept. 30.

Liberian Thomas Eric Duncan, who flew from Liberia to Texas, first went to Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas on Sept. 25 suffering from fever and vomiting. He was later diagnosed with Ebola and at press time was isolated and being treated.

President Barack Obama spoke in a

September press conference about the worldwide situation. "If the outbreak is not stopped now, we could be looking at hundreds of thousands of people infected, with profound political and economic and security implications for all of us," he said.

Spread from wild animals to humans and from humans to humans through contact with blood or other bodily fluids, the deadly virus has swept across Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and infected one person in Senegal.

"This is a global threat and it demands a truly global response," Obama said. (TAB)

'Ongoing need'

Deadline extended for Birmingham food drive

National Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Foundation and members of LIBA (Liberians in Birmingham, Alabama, Inc.) have teamed up to send a 40-foot ocean container filled with dry goods to Liberia "to aid residents who face a growing hunger crisis as a result of the Ebola outbreak."

But they can't do so until it's full.

As the virus sweeps across Liberia and other surrounding countries like Sierra Leone and Guinea, those suffering from the virus and family members left at home to fend for themselves are in need of food.

On Sept. 20 and 27 several Alabama Baptist church members, community members and others brought rice, beans, canned meat and other dry goods to donate to the Help Liberia Food Drive at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, where the container was housed, and Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Many gave what they could and the original plan was to send the container by the end of September. But as that timeframe approached, David George, WMU

Foundation president, realized the effort needed more time.

In order to see the container filled and allow more churches to participate in the effort, the deadline for donating goods has been extended to Oct. 18. Drop-off locations include Mountain Brook Baptist; Sixth Avenue Baptist; Shades Crest Baptist Church, Bluff Park; and Brewster Road Community Church, Birmingham. Drop-off times are Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Eddie Gibson, pastor of Brewster Road Community Church, Birmingham, places bags of beans in the ocean container Sept. 20.

The WMU Foundation also is collecting financial gifts through the WMU HEART (Humanitarian Emergency Aid for Rebuilding Tomorrow) Fund to help purchase food and ship the container to Liberia. To give online, visit wmu-foundation.com or mail a gift to WMU Foundation, 100 Missionary Ridge, Birmingham, AL 35242.

A "packing party" will take place Oct. 18 as the donated goods will be packed into the container, prayed over and sent off, George said.

"This will be an ongoing need," George noted, so sending the container once it is filled will be the best option to help those facing the hunger crisis. (Neisha Fuson)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

A mother and her children, all members of Shades Crest Baptist Church, Bluff Park, donate bags of rice to the Help Liberia Food Drive collection at Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Sept. 27.

WEST AFRICA

EBOLA CASES by COUNTRY

1. Guinea

Case Count: 1,157
Deaths: 710

2. Liberia

Case Count: 3,696
Deaths: 1,998

3. Nigeria

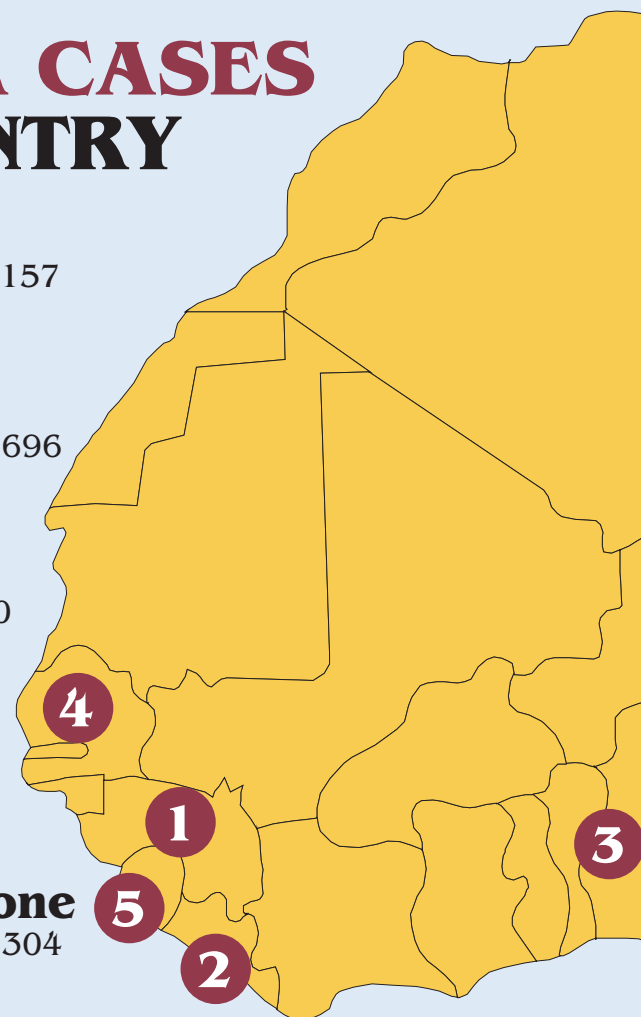
Case Count: 20
Deaths: 8

4. Senegal

Case Count: 1
Deaths: 0

5. Sierra Leone

Case Count: 2,304
Deaths: 622



Total Case Count: 7,178 / Total Deaths: 3,338
(as of Oct. 3, 2014)

Fast facts

- On Sept. 30, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirmed the first travel-associated case of Ebola to be diagnosed in the United States.
- Average Ebola virus disease (EVD) case fatality rate — 50 percent.
- In the 2014 Ebola outbreak, nearly all of the cases of EVD are a result of human-to-human transmission.
- The incubation period from time of infection to symptoms is 2 to 21 days.
- The 2014 Ebola outbreak is the largest Ebola outbreak in history and the first Ebola outbreak in West Africa. This outbreak is the first Ebola epidemic the world has ever known.

Sources: www.cdc.gov and www.who.int

African Baptists ask churches worldwide to set aside Oct. 11-12 for Ebola prayer

The All-Africa Baptist Fellowship has set aside Sunday, Oct. 12, to focus prayer on the Ebola outbreak, which to date has claimed more than 3,000 lives across West Africa.

The prayer focus, endorsed by leaders of American Baptist Churches USA and the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF), aims to create awareness of the deadly Ebola virus and ask God for divine intervention to stop epidemics raging in some countries, prevent their spread to others, "sanctify" medications given to patients to speed up healing and to protect the lives of health workers and other care givers.

"I invite every American Baptist congregation to join our brothers and sisters in

Christ in prayer of Africa on Oct. 11 and 12 as they face the Ebola crisis," said Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA. "Let us pray for victims and their families, for medical staff who selflessly continue to serve and for the Church as pastors and members are called to minister in the midst of this outbreak."

The call to prayer spans two days, because some NABF member bodies worship on Saturday.

The All-Africa Baptist Fellowship is one of the six regions of the Baptist World Alliance. It represents more than 10 million Baptists in Africa and more than 50 member bodies including conventions, unions, churches and institutions. (ABP)



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

► **Grace Life Church, Bessemer**, will hold Pumpkin Patch at Shadow Lake in McCalla, Oct. 16–19 and 23–26, Thursdays and Fridays, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; and Sundays, 1–5 p.m. There will be face painting, games, hay rides, inflatables, train rides, a petting zoo and pumpkins. Baked goods and concessions will be available on Saturdays and Sundays. A trunk or treat will be held at Shadow Lake on Oct. 31, 6 p.m. There will be candy, hot dogs, drinks and inflatables. For information visit www.yourgracelife.com. Joel Frederick is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **McElwain Church, Birmingham**, will hold Tailgate Sunday with the theme “Fan or Follower?” on Oct. 12, 9:30 a.m. at the McElwain ball field next to the church. A worship service on the field will follow. Josh Niblett, head football coach at Hoover High School, will speak. There will be special music. Bring a lawn chair. Food and drinks will be provided during the fellowship time. A nursery also will be provided during worship. Fred Johns is interim pastor. ► **Westmont Church, Birmingham**, will hold revival Oct. 19–22. Daven Watkins, pastor of First Church, Pleasant Grove, will speak and Chip Wise will lead music. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6:30 nightly Sunday–Wednesday. Child care will be provided for children up to age 4. For information visit www.westmontbaptist.org or call 205-788-6811. Nathan Daniels is pastor. ► **Ashley Fisher** will speak at **First Church, Leeds**, on Oct. 14 at the NOAH covered dish luncheon at 10:30 a.m. The NOAH group meets each month. For information call 205-699-6141.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 19, 10:30 a.m. The King’s Messengers will perform. Lunch will follow. The church will not have Sunday School or service that night. Randy Burtram is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Mount Gilead Church, Elba**, will hold a singing Oct. 18, 5–8 p.m. The Stricklands, Derek Snellgrove and The Singing Miracles will perform. Refreshments will follow. Dewey Emfinger is pastor. ► **Whitewater Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 12. Services will begin at 10:30 a.m. Lunch on the grounds will follow. Travis Johnson will

speaking and music will be provided by the church choir. Richard Collier is pastor. ► **Calvary Church, Enterprise**, will hold revival services Oct. 19–20. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and Monday at 7 p.m. Ronnie Smith will speak. Kerry Mitchell is pastor.

ESCAMBIA

► **Little Escambia Church, Flomaton**, will hold revival services Oct. 19–22. Services will be Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday at 7 p.m. Phil Glisson will speak and Teresa Glisson will lead children’s church during the service Sunday morning and each night. Doug Hogg is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **First Church, Hokes Bluff**, will hold the Speak Life Hokes Bluff Women’s Conference, Oct. 17–18. Doors will open Oct. 17 at 5:30 p.m. and at 8:30 a.m. Oct. 18. Keynote speakers will include Lisa Whelchel, best known for her role on “The Facts of Life;” Cassie Duncan Shields, women’s Bible study leader for First, Hokes Bluff; and Laura Swann, founder of Rooted in Love. For tickets and registration information visit www.hokesbluffwomensconference.com or visit the conference Facebook page, “Hokes Bluff Women’s Conference.”

FRIENDSHIP

► **Union Hill Church, Oneonta**, will hold an evening of worship Oct. 19, 6 p.m., to celebrate the 40th anniversary of its church organist, Mauara Phillips. Bill Barnett is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **First Church, Ardmore**, will hold The Judgement House and ‘Shaken,’ a Christian alternative to the notorious haunted house, Oct. 18–19, 22, 26 and 29. The Judgement House will be Saturday 5–11 p.m., Sundays 5–9 p.m. and Wednesdays 6:30–8:30 p.m. The experience takes approximately one hour and groups of 15–20 enter every 8–10 minutes. There will be a concession stand with snacks for sale. This is a presentation of The Judgement House Ministry Team at First, Ardmore. For reservations call 256-423-3992. Alan Hughes is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Churches of Lookout Mountain Association** will celebrate Outreach Sunday on Oct. 18. The event “The Day We All Go Visiting” has the goal that each church will have members that visit 20 homes. Lloyd Borden is director of missions.

MORGAN

► **Shady Grove Church, Danville**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary Oct. 19. The service will begin at 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Johnny Tucker will speak. Lunch and gospel singing will follow the service. A new church cookbook also will be for sale. For information call Betty Boyd at 256-773-5648. Tom Campbell is pastor. ► **Caleb Smith** is the new associate pastor for **Shoal Creek Church, Decatur**. He holds a bachelor’s degree in biblical studies from Blue Mountain College in Mississippi. He previously served as youth pastor for North Gwinnett Church, Suwanee, Ga. He and his wife, Mallory, have two children.



SMITH

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Evergreen Church, Vance**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Oct. 18–19. The reception will be Saturday, 3–5 p.m. A sing-a-long will follow. Dinner will be provided. Sunday School will be at 9:45 a.m. and a special service will begin at 10:45 a.m. A covered dish lunch will follow. For information call Beverly Hubbard at 205-826-1947. Jack Clary is pastor. ► **Reno Church, McCalla**, will hold an Old Fashioned Senior Saints Singing on Oct. 20, 10 a.m. The Kingwood Singers, The Pea Ridge Singers and The Reno Quartet will perform. Lunch will follow. Roasco Kornegay is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, will hold a special worship service featuring Jenni, a missionary to East Asia. The service will be Oct. 12, 10:30 a.m. Mike Stephens is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Wagarville Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 19. Services will begin at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. Joshua Purvis is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Fairview West Church, Hanceville**, will hold revival services Oct. 12–15. Sunday services will be at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday–Wednesday service will be at 7 nightly. Larry Brown will speak and Randy Quattlebaum will lead music. Trueman Davis is pastor. ☪

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

FBC Boaz member named Ms. Senior Alabama

For Renee Pierce, music associate for First Baptist Church, Boaz, entering the Ms. Senior Marshall County pageant in March was a “step outside her comfort zone.”

But not only was she named Ms. Senior Marshall County 2014, she went on to compete and win the Ms. Senior Alabama title Aug. 9.

Now she’s preparing to compete in Ms. Senior America in Atlantic City, N.J., Oct. 28–30.

For women 60 years and older the Ms. Senior pageant contestants compete in what’s called the “age of elegance,” Pierce said.

Prior to competing in the Marshall County pageant, Pierce had never competed in any pageant. She had previously judged the Marshall County pageant and her director encouraged her to enter in 2014.

She earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Montevallo and has taught piano and music classes off and on for more than 15 years.

In the Ms. Senior America competition Pierce will compete in evening gown/poise event, interview, talent and recite her “philosophy of life” statement, a 35-second statement that she describes as “the words you’d like to leave behind for others to follow.”

For her talent Pierce will play a rendition of “How Great Thou Art” on the piano.

Her husband, Tommy, is the minister of music for First, Boaz, and the couple has three children and five grandchildren.

Pierce said she sees the opportunity to compete in the pageants as something that “fell in her lap.”

“I think because maybe God has a purpose in it and I’m hoping part of that purpose will give me the opportunity to witness for Him. ... I’m hoping and praying that (in) all this however far I go, whether I win nationals or not, will be an open door of testimony for Jesus.” (Neisha Fuson)



PIERCE

Auburn FBC music minister Peterson retires

After 41 years, the longest tenure of any staff member at Auburn First Baptist Church, Dale Peterson retired from his role as minister of music Sept. 14.

Peterson earned a bachelor’s degree from Kentucky Southern College in Louisville, Ky., and a master’s degree from the University of Cincinnati’s College-Conservatory of Music.

While still in high school Peterson served as part-time minister of music at his home church of 18th Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., and while in college he served in the same role at Fort Mitchell Baptist Church, Fort Mitchell, Ky., and Lee’s Lane Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

Peterson then took on his first full-time position at Auburn First Baptist.

In an afternoon finale concert Sept. 14, Peterson directed 11 pieces performed by the sanctuary choir. About 35 former Auburn University students who sang in the church’s college choir over the years also joined in the concert.

Auburn Mayor Bill Ham presented Peterson with a resolution and church members presented him with a book of letters written by former church members, former church staff, composers and others.

The church commissioned Charles McCartha to compose a piece titled “A Servant Heart; A Servant Song” and the sanctuary choir performed it for Peterson.

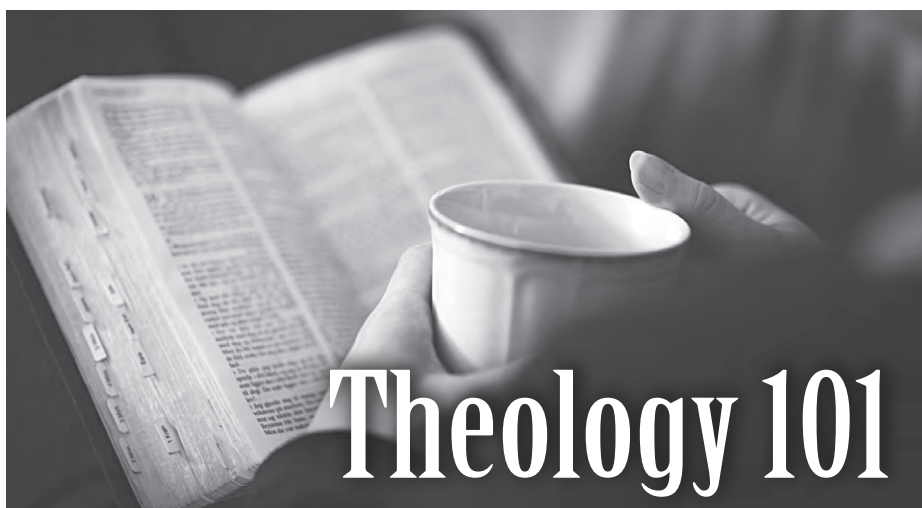
Peterson plans to continue to teach part-time in the music department at Auburn University and will continue to serve as Auburn First Baptist’s composer in residence.

He and his wife, Libby, have two children and four grandchildren.

To those present at the celebration Peterson said, “Thank you for being my family and for being my family’s family. My life has been blessed by yours.” (Neisha Fuson)



PETERSON



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Living

Walking in Love (Part 1 of 2)

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

For two weeks we have considered how Christians are expected to walk differently in this present world — different from unconverted outsiders and from our own unconverted past. Ephesians 5 opens with the call for Christians, as God's beloved children, to be imitators of God by walking in love. This introductory call to imitate God, who is love, contains two motivations for us to walk in God-likeness at the point of love.

First motivation

The first motivation is the fact that we are loved. Like the first Ephesian readers, we also are God's "beloved children" (5:1). We are moved to walk in love because God first loved us. The second motivation is the fact that as His children, we are begotten. As children of God by virtue of a new birth, we are both begotten and beloved. Enabled by new birth and inspired by Christ's example, the Christian life is to be one of walking in love.

Immediately our attention is drawn to Christ's example as our pattern for walking in love. We are to walk "as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (5:2). The key phrase that informs us about walking in love is "as Christ loved us." In a single verse, we have the perfect pattern for how to walk in love. From what is said about Christ's love for us, we learn several aspects of living a life characterized by love.

Christ's pattern for walking in love reminds us that the Christian walk is a self-giving one. In reminding us that Christ loved us, the verse declares He "gave Himself up for us." Too often life is more focused on gaining than on giving. We too easily find ourselves grasping for status, security or self-image. Walking in love like Christ loved us emphasizes self-giving rather than seeking to gain for ourselves.

Sharp focus

Christ's pattern for loving also reminds us that our love must have a sharp focus on loving people more than on loving popularity, possessions or

pre-eminence. Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. Notice the double reference to "us." Love like that of Jesus is people-focused love. We are ourselves the objects of His love and self-giving. Too often we appear to love the things of this world in preference to its people.

Offering freely given

Love like that of Christ is extended freely. Our passage describes His love for us as an offering. Offerings at their best are freewill offerings, not gifts extracted from us by a sense of obligation or by external motivation due to people expecting us to be giving persons. Around the church we often use the expression, "a freewill offering." Love is our freewill offering to others. Pre-eminently Christ's love was, and is, sacrificial in nature. He gave Himself for us as a "sacrifice."

We tend to give at the level of affordability, rather than to the point of sacrifice. Our eye is on how much we have left after expressing love through giving. Jesus complimented the sacrificial giving of a certain widow by noting she gave all she had with nothing left over for herself.

'Fragrant' love

The passage describes Christ's love as "fragrant." The idea suggests an aroma that is pleasing to God's nostrils. Walking in love like Christ loves us is a God-pleasing way to live.

As we allow God to shed His love in us by His Spirit, we will find ourselves more and more walking in love that is self-giving, people-focused, freely expressed, sacrificial and pleasing to God. 🙏

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.



Prayer for the persecuted

Open Doors USA webcast to equip, inform

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists have a unique opportunity to pray for believers around the world who face persecution. An interactive webcast sponsored by Open Doors USA — a group that raises awareness about the persecuted church — will take place Nov. 2, 6-7 p.m.

The webcast coincides with Open Doors' International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

"The ... webcast is a unique opportunity to expose Alabama congregations to the reality of Christian persecution," said Michael Wood, director of partnerships for Open Doors USA. "It's also a great way to equip Christians to pray consistently and specifically for those who share our faith but not our freedom. The persecuted church needs to know they are not forgotten. By participating in the webcast, Alabama Baptists can connect to their persecuted brothers and sisters to help cultivate the hope and encouragement they so desperately need."

Participating in the webcast will be David Platt, president of the International Mission Board; Nik and Ruth Ripken, authors of "The Insanity of God" and "The Insanity of Obedience"; and Todd Smith of Christian music group Selah.

Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, and Valleydale Church, Birmingham, are two of the host sites in the state.

Cottage Hill Baptist's commitment to Open Doors runs deep as they were among the first churches to participate in Muslim

Bible Day many years ago — an Open Doors project where churches help fund the distribution of Bibles to Muslim countries. The church also houses the Open Doors USA staff offices.

Alan Floyd, Cottage Hill's pastor, said his church has always had a commitment to missions around the world, but when he came on board two years ago the church made the decision to place greater emphasis on support of the persecuted church.

"This event kicks off our missions giving emphasis as well as Lottie Moon (Christmas Offering season)," Floyd noted.

Connected to global church

Cottage Hill averages 1,500 in its morning worship services, and the ministry staff is hopeful that at least half of the morning attenders will return for the webcast event.

Jason Dees, pastor of Valleydale Church, said, "We regularly pray for the persecuted church, and Michael Wood has been a friend of Valleydale's for a long time. He has taken Valleydale members to some of the most difficult places on earth for the church and has been a regular part of our missions conference each year. We want to do whatever we can to be connected to the global church and most especially the persecuted church."

To register for the event, visit live.opendoorsusa.org. To download a monthly prayer calendar and sign up to receive weekly prayer requests for the persecuted church, visit www.opendoorsusa.org/pray. "Like" Open Doors USA on Facebook or follow them on Twitter (@OpenDoors). 🙏

RA/Adventure Camp recognized



Photo by Debbie Campbell

A special recognition for Adventure Camp (formerly Royal Ambassador camp) and leaders who played significant roles in the camp's history was held Sept. 25 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. It was a time of 'commemoration and celebration, rejoicing over God's Work.' Honorees include (l to r): Wayne Wood; the late Mac Johnson, received by his daughter, Emily Brooks; the late William 'Doc' Isbell, received by his wife Nell Isbell; Tommy Puckett; the late Jim Bethea, received by his son, Tim Bethea; and the late Clayton Gilbert, received by his son, J.B. Gilbert.



Pastor Gil McKee of FBC Tuscaloosa recognizes the chiefs of seven local departments, including police officers, deputy sheriffs, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and volunteer responders during the church's First Responder Sunday service.

Photos by Barry Fikes

'God, use me'

FBC Tuscaloosa honors first responders in community

By **Sammie Jo Barstow**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Tommy Neiman, firefighter with the Fort Pearce Fire Department in Florida, is responding to an emergency, his prayer frequently is brief. However, "God, use me," has become his model prayer in a crisis situation and in everyday life.

Neiman's 29-year career has afforded numerous opportunities for service and encouraging other first responders to use their skills and faith to serve God in every circumstance. On Sept. 21, at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, in Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, he shared his testimony. In the congregation were first responders from seven local departments, including police officers, deputy sheriffs, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and volunteer responders.

According to Pastor Gil McKee, First Responder Sunday was planned to honor and show appreciation to these local public servants. McKee said the church recognizes we live in a culture that resists authority of every kind.

"We wanted to show our respect for those who put their lives on the line every day for very modest salaries and great personal sacrifice," he said. "First responders should be regarded as heroes and heroines and respected as such."

Each guest was given a copy of Neiman's book, "Sirens For the Cross," and a coin with a first responder symbol on one side and a church emblem on the reverse. McKee told the responders he hoped they would carry the coin and remember church members were praying for them daily.

Governor Robert Bentley spoke briefly to those being honored. He recalled that Tuscaloosa has a special reason to be grateful to first responders because of their outstanding work after the April 27,

2011, tornado that ripped through the city. But he also emphasized these men and women leave home every morning knowing they may have the opportunity to save lives but also that they may risk their own lives.

Neiman also emphasized the risk involved in everyday crises.

"Seeing smoke in the distance makes my heart rate go up," he said. "Every responder looks forward to getting that next alarm. That's what we do. But sometimes the next alarm will be some responder's last alarm."

He recalled traveling to New York City to serve after Sept. 11 when approximately 240 firefighters lost their lives. "That was how many firefighters we had in my whole department back home. I imagined how it would feel to lose all those workers."

One Scripture he frequently quotes to people is John 16:33: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world."

Among the crises Neiman said God has given him some truly joyous moments, including delivering six babies. One day he said he answered a call to a birthday party where a 107-year-old man had fall-

en and needed the rescue unit, and then later in the day he delivered a baby in an emergency situation. Being a first responder provides "an opportunity for seeing the wide range of life," he said.

For all responders a crisis means quick response, he added. At his department when an alarm is sounded, firefighters are expected to put on their gear, slide down a 15-foot pole and be in the fire truck in 90 seconds.

Neiman said he often asks himself: "Do I respond to Christ that quickly?"

McKee hopes churches in other communities will host a First Responder Sunday. "It is a great way for the church to say 'thank you' to those who serve the citizens and the churches of our communities." ❧



NEIMAN



Ebenezer East in Greenville celebrates centennial

Ebenezer East Baptist Church, Greenville, celebrated its 100th anniversary Aug. 10 with a special service.

Pastor Nathan Skipper welcomed more than 120 guests at 10 a.m. for the celebration service. Following a time of singing, a brief history of the church was given by Rochelle McClure Mosley and church clerk Virginia Branum.

Sandra Marshall Porter, who was raised in the Butler Baptist Association church, presented a 100-year commendation from Gov. Robert Bentley.

Don Donald, representative for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, was on hand to present the church with a framed certificate.

Also during the service Ella Mae Thompson Elder was recognized as a missionary from the church, relaying the story of when God called her into missions.

Skipper delivered the message and afterward lunch was served in the fellowship hall.

Skipper noted his vision for the future of Ebenezer East Baptist is "to see us grow closer to Christ and closer to each other through strong preaching and teaching. I also hope to see that our children are disciplined in the Lord and learn the truths of our faith. Finally I hope to see us grow more fervent and urgent in our efforts to reach the lost in the community and around the world through loving our neighbors and giving in support of missions." (Julie Payne)

Oneonta's Park Avenue Baptist marks 50 years

The 50th anniversary of Park Avenue Baptist Church, Oneonta, was celebrated Aug. 10 and was a "huge number 10 success," said Kay Miller, chair of the anniversary committee and charter member.

With the jubilee theme of Leviticus 25:11 in mind, participants experienced a "day of renewal, reunion and refreshing," Miller said. Festivities began with a 10:30 a.m. service, where the history of Park Avenue Baptist, compiled by Miller, was read and the choir performed special music. Former member Dan Delize acted as master of ceremonies and his son, Marco, fulfilled his role as Park Avenue's music director.

Ernie Carroll, director of missions for Friendship Baptist Association, and Tom Allen, an Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, each presented a certificate to Pastor Odis Epps commemorating the milestone. Former pastor Dan Sims brought the sermon.

Lunch on the grounds immediately followed the morning service and was a time where "a lot of friendships were renewed," Miller said.

A congregational singing commenced at 2 p.m., where Saved by Grace, Park Avenue's quartet, performed. More than 125 participants were given the opportunity to share during the closing testimony time.

"It was a grand and glorious day," Miller said. (Maggie Walsh)

Society Hill Baptist celebrates 175-year milestone

Society Hill Baptist Church near Opelika marked 175 years of ministry Aug. 10 with a service that began at 10:30 a.m.

Bill King, director of missions for Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, provided the church's special music.

Calvin Milford, representative from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate. Louise Huskey, who serves as church clerk, treasurer and Sunday School teacher and whose husband was the longest tenured pastor of Society Hill Baptist, accepted the certificate on behalf of the church.

Also during the service a slideshow of photos of the church through the years was shown, and Pastor Mark Carlock delivered a message about the past and the future.

Former pastors Bill Baker and John David Shirley as well as the wife of the late Bob Atkins Jr., who also was a former pastor, all attended the service. Following lunch, guests stayed to enjoy King's comedy act as Billy Bob Bohannon.

Carlock noted his vision for the future of Society Hill Baptist is that "we keep doing the Lord's work but use different methods to reach people of our community and the state of Alabama." (Julie Payne)

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Ten Commandments — Tenth in a series

Exploring Three 'Cs' to Discover Victory Over Coveting

A black Porsche convertible caught my eye at the spotlight beside me. I imagined sitting behind the wheel of that beautiful car, top down, wind in my face as I shifted through the six-speed transmission. A honk from the car behind me brought me back to reality. The light had turned green. I pulled away from the intersection with only the taillights of the Porsche fading in the distance.

Since childhood, I have enjoyed cars. Ironically, or perhaps providentially, *The Alabama Baptist* asked me to write an article on the tenth commandment which states, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's" (Ex. 20:17).

What is coveting? The Hebrew word for covet, "hamad," means to "desire obsessively, covet or lust after for oneself." Within the word is the implication of "desire" which often leads to action. Does this command mean that I can no longer gaze at new cars? Is it a sin for me to love to sit in a new automobile? How should I understand and apply God's prohibition of coveting? Simply put, what does "you shall not covet" mean to you and me? I believe there are three "Cs" you must explore if you are to adequately understand and conquer coveting.

1. CONTEMPLATE the danger of covetous thoughts and desires.

The tenth commandment raises the bar on sin to include thoughts, desires and attitudes. "You shall not covet," points us to the teaching of Jesus as He addresses adultery: "You have heard that it was said 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-18). In other words, our thoughts and desires can be sinful and therefore destructive.

Uncontrolled thoughts and desires are dangerous because they can lead to the breaking of other commandments. In fact, coveting can be seen as an entrance to which all the commandments can be broken. As innocuous as some people might view longings of the heart, in reality improper thoughts are seeds for numerous sins.

Ahab, for example, coveted his neighbor's vineyard, which ultimately led to

By Rob Jackson, Ph.D

Rob Jackson is pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur. He also serves as an adjunct professor for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is president of Romanian-American Mission.



the breaking of the sixth and ninth commandments (1 Kings 21). King David's coveting his neighbor's wife (Bathsheba) resulted in his breaking the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments. In these few examples, it is hard to deny the sin of coveting is dangerous and often leads to other sins.

2. CONSIDER how coveting reveals your love for God and others.

Coveting is sinful in that it can lead to other vices. Even if none of the other commandments are broken because of your desires, coveting is still a sin. Remember all sin separates us from a holy God. Coveting is longing for something that does not belong to us. Coveting, an obsessive desire, reveals your heart condition. Your longings, your affections, your thoughts and desires should serve as a "barometer" to the true condition of your heart. No wonder the Bible states, "as a man thinks in his heart so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

A coveting person does not give God the love He deserves. You can't truly love God when your affections and longings are for things that do not belong to you. Instead of finding contentment in Christ, a coveting heart longs for more and more of things that belong to others. Coveting hides God in the fog of personal desires and longings. The Rolling Stones' song "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" could be written about someone who breaks the tenth commandment. Coveting ensures you don't find satisfaction in God. In fact, the tenth commandment is in some way a restatement of the first commandment. Paul remarks that we should "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you ... and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). Coveting is idolatry and reveals a diminished love for God.

A coveting person does not show neighbors the love God demands. "You shall not

covet" does not deny that God's people may wish to have good and proper things. Coveting, which is longing to have things that belong to someone else, reflects a lack of love for others. Coveting hides others in the fog of personal desires and longings. In this covetous fog, the only person you can see is yourself and your own greedy desires. To long for forbidden things reveals a self-centered heart. Let me be clear, you do not truly love your neighbor when you lust and want what God has given him or her. Coveting is sinful in that it shows a lack of love for others.

3. CONTROL coveting by turning to God and giving to others.

If you, like me, enjoy a glance at a shiny black Porsche (or Buick, Ford, Toyota and so forth) is that coveting? Not necessarily. Coveting is more than simply looking at a beautiful car (although there is often a fine line between looking and longing). How do we know if we are coveting? The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). He will reveal sin in your life. Ask Him to show you the condition of your heart. Ask Him to reveal your true longings. Ask Him if there is anything you desire obsessively, covet or lust after for yourself.

What should you do next?

a) If you are not a Christian, turn from your sin and turn to Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life. John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Turn to Christ in saving faith and experience this new life today.

b) If you are a Christian, turn to God in confession of your sin. As the Bible teaches, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

c) Each of you should look to others and their needs. Giving is the opposite of coveting. Where coveting is the desire to take from someone, giving is focusing on what you can do for someone. Acts 20:35b states "it is more blessed to give than to receive." In the power of the Holy Spirit, focus upon, dwell upon and long for ways to give to others.

To discover victory over coveting, I suggest you need to navigate three "Cs" — you must contemplate, consider and control the sin of coveting. 🙏

'America's best'

UMobile, Samford, Judson recognized nationally

The University of Mobile, Samford University and Judson College have been named some of "America's Best Christian Colleges."

The schools are three of only 92 colleges and universities nationwide to receive the 2014-2015 designation.

The results of the 24th Annual National College Survey, conducted by Institutional Research & Evaluation, Inc. (IR&E), show that 402 Christian institutions of higher education were selected for evaluation.

"The IR&E identifies the American colleges and universities providing students the highest quality education in a Christian environment," said Lewis T. Lindsey Jr., president of the IR&E.

To be considered for the designation "America's Best Christian Colleges," an institution must be an accredited, four-year college or university that offers bachelor degrees. It also must offer full residential facilities including residence halls and dining services. The fall 2013 freshman class must have had a high school GPA or SAT/ACT score equal to or above the national average for all freshmen entering higher education Christian institutions. The school must be affiliated with a recognized Christian denomination or interdenominational institution that incorporates Christian principles and beliefs into its curriculum.

The annual survey was conducted between April 1 and July 31, 2013. (UMobile, TAB)

UMobile enrolls largest freshman class, welcomes most residents this fall

The University of Mobile enrolled its largest freshman class and welcomed its largest residential population in the school's history for fall semester 2014.

The university reported Sept. 25 that a total of 275 freshmen enrolled this fall, compared to 259 in 2013.

The overall enrollment remained steady, with an even 1,600 students enrolled. That is slightly down from last year's fall semester 2013 enrollment of 1,610.

Recognized nationally

Kim Leousis, vice president for enrollment services, said the university is becoming recognized nationally and this has contributed to both the rise in freshman enrollment and the increased number of students living on campus.

A breakdown of fall 2014 enrollment finds 1,299 traditional undergraduate students, 135 graduate students and 211 adult students taking courses in the university's Center for Adult Programs.

The university has a retention rate for freshmen to sophomores of 77 percent, well above the national average of about 70 percent. (UMobile)

"And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" 1 Cor. 14:8

Keeping **Christ** in **Christmas**

Samford to host Keep Christmas Alive concert featuring Booth Brothers

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

After seven consecutive years in Huntsville, the eighth annual Keep Christmas Alive (KCA) concert will take place for the first time in Birmingham this November.

KCA features world-class gospel music with a mission of “reclaiming Christmas, proclaiming the birth of Christ and proving that old-fashioned traditional sacred Christmas music can be joyful, festive and fun ... for the entire family.”

Founder and producer Brice Marsh noted KCA is much more than a concert — it’s a concept.

He attributes his initial inspiration for the event to a trip he took to Branson, Mo., in 2004, where he attended several Christmas programs that emphasized the idea of keeping Christ in Christmas.

Convicted to rekindle the same community Christmas spirit back home in Alabama, Marsh and several friends prayed and brainstormed for a vision. Through those prayers

a KCA committee was formed and the first KCA program was held at Huntsville’s Von Braun Concert Hall in December 2005.

“We want to show our children and our grandchildren it’s not against the law to celebrate Christmas in America,” Marsh said of the concert. “Maybe we can at least encourage

more people to have the courage to boldly proclaim ‘Merry Christmas’ rather than ‘Happy Holidays.’”

Marsh said since KCA began it has grown and improved each year, and he added this year’s concert promises to be the best yet.

The event will take place Nov. 22 at Samford University’s Wright Center at 2 p.m., with doors opening at 1 p.m.

“Our featured group is The Booth Brothers, a southern gospel trio that’s won Absolutely Gospel Music awards for Trio of the Year, Male Group of the Year, Best Live Performer of

the Year, Song of the Year and many other awards,” Marsh said.

Also returning by popular demand are The Voices of Lee, a 13-member a cappella group

from Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn.

In addition, other performers include Bob Smith, vocalist and emcee; Frank Jones, pianist and accompanist for the Alabama Singing Men; Edie Hand, TV personality and storyteller; Austin Foster, singer; and the Redemption Road Quartet.

Inspiring music

Marsh noted people travel to KCA from “considerable distances” and come knowing they will hear inspiring music. They are challenged to leave the program with a renewed determination to reclaim Christmas.

“Since (the concert is) just before Thanksgiving ... it’s a great way to get the Christmas spirit started for the family,” he said. ❧



Photo courtesy of Brice Marsh

Brice Marsh (right) is founder and executive producer of the annual Keep Christmas Alive concert. His wife, Leigh, serves as co-producer.

For more details about
Keep Christmas Alive, visit
www.KeepChristmasAlive.org. For tickets, visit
tickets.samford.edu.

Proceeds from the event will
benefit St. Jude’s Children’s
Research Hospital and
Children’s of Alabama.

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

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: newcovenantbaptiststarab@gmail.com.

INTERIM PASTOR: Brent Baptist Church in Brent, Ala., is accepting resumés for an interim pastor. Cutoff date for resumés is Oct. 29. Please send resumés to: Brent Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 246, Brent, AL 35034. Please visit brentbaptistchurch.org for more information about our church.

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.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., is seeking a part-time minister of music. We have a blended style of worship. Contact Pastor Steve Potts (phone: 205-798-3341, email: steve.potts@wbclive.com).

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Eldridge Baptist Church in Eldridge, Ala., is seeking a worship leader to lead

our choir and congregation in a traditional/contemporary worship service. Respond to: eldridgebaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

INTERIM MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER: Resumés should be sent to: Greensboro Baptist Church, ATTN: Music/Youth Search Committee, 908 Main Street, Greensboro, AL 36744, or email to: greensboro@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 candidate’s 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.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES: First Baptist Church of Foley, Ala., is accepting resumés for the full-time position of minister of children and families. Please email resumés to: scollins@fbcfoley.com.

TWO POSITIONS AVAILABLE: Deerfoot Baptist Church in Trussville is seeking two part-time positions: interim preschool/children’s minister and interim student minister. Interim positions needed up to 12 months. Experience required. Please submit resumés or questions to: phall@deerfootbaptist.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: The DeKalb Baptist Association in NE Alabama is currently accepting resumés for the position of director of missions. Acceptable candidates must have a history of involvement in associational missions and support for the Southern Baptist Convention. Resumés can be sent to: DOM Search Committee, 218 Parker Avenue SE, Rainsville, AL 35986, or email to: dbasecretary@farmerstel.com.

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Want to know GOD?

Pastor Steven W. Grissom
Haven Baptist Church, Madison

The God of the Bible is not silent and He is not subject to our demands. He reveals Himself through His Word and the Word of God reminds us that His words are true, flawless and profitable (Prov. 30:5, 2 Tim. 3:16). His words are profitable in that they point us to Him, teach us of His promises and reveal His plan.

When I was a missionary in Canada, one of our students, Eric, constantly asked questions about Christianity. It was so foreign to him since he grew up in Communist China. After studying much of the Bible and seeing God’s beauty in creation Eric came to Christ. He recognized his sin and rejoiced in the fact that he could be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. He understood that humanity has a sin nature and that at the core we are corrupted, deceitful and sick. One of Eric’s favorite Bible passages became Psalm 90:1–2 which reminds us of our Creator and His power.

The power of God is revealed in His gospel. The gospel teaches us that we are sinners and are in need of a Savior. Many of the religions of the world offer salvation whether it is through an eightfold path (Buddhism), a philosophical system (Hinduism) or through the Quran (Islam). Through Christianity we can know God through the God-man, Jesus Christ. God became a man in Jesus, who was perfect, and then took my sin on the cross. He took the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in Him. By His death we are forgiven. By His resurrection we live and find victory. This is good news, but to know God we must turn and trust in Him.

In order to know God we must follow God. If we are to follow Him we must obey Him. The Bible is clear that we must repent and believe. Repentance is not perfection; repentance is not merely a change in our behavior, it is a change in our beliefs. We believe in the authority of Jesus and submit to Him. It is only by God’s grace, through faith, in Christ alone, we are saved. This is good news! ❧



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While almost all of the reasons for procrastinating are understandable, none will serve to lessen the reality that the absence of an estate plan can lead to devastating consequences for family members we leave behind. A proper estate plan should accomplish the following:

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Grace Gifts

MEMORIALS:

(The name of the deceased is bolded)

Agee, Gussie Ruth, Pine Hill: Pine Hill BC

Allred, Rev. Donald E., Prattville:

Mrs. Donald E. Allred & Family

Andrews, Evelyn, Dothan: Rusty Andrews

Boyington, Viola F., Bay Minette: Faye S. Parker

Callaway, Marjorie, Mobile: Oak Grove BC of Pine Hill

Cobb, Mr. Allison, Spanish Fort:

Wayne & Faye Parker

Downey, Diane, Thomasville: Kathleen Pope

Etheridge, Grey, Jr., Pleasant Grove:

Jean Dunn & Sandra Mitchell

Gandy, Henry: Bethlehem BC of Linden

Garner, H.H., Oneonta:

Mrs. Donald E. Allred & Family

Hand, John E., Prattville: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce

Hoomes, Grace Murphy: Christine Eiland

Hopper, Kathryn: Centreville BC

Home, Jeanette, Salem: J.W. & Evelyn Gullatte

Hutcherson, D.C., Monroeville: Eastwood BC of Monroeville

Jackson, Shields: Dorcus SS of Ebenezer BC of Butler

Jones, Nettie Jester, Ashville:

Mrs. Elvelier Richey and Jay & Martha

Joyner, Ms. Cecil, Gallion: Providence BC of Gallion

Khare, Dr. Santosh, Hoover:

Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce

Lowery, Marjorie Louise, Montgomery & Decatur:

Pine Hill BC, Mr. & Mrs. Harold Swearingen

Lowry, John Phillip, Leighton:

Priscilla Carpenter

Paul, James Woodrow, Andalusia:

Mr. & Mrs. Ottis Reynolds

Roberts, Nancy Durant, Durant Chapel BC of

Bay Minette

Salter, John E., Bay Minette: John T. Salter,

Faye S. Parker, Elaine S. Roley

Salter, Katherine Ryland, Bay Minette: John T. Salter, Faye S. Parker, Elaine S. Roley

Salter, Katherine and John E. (Anniversary),

Bay Minette: John T. Salter, Faye S. Parker, Elaine S. Roley

Steen, Fred, Demopolis:

Mr. & Mrs. James Henders & Family

Tate, Christy Malden, Mississippi: Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette

Wildes, Dorothy Van Sant: Demopolis Love Ones



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LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



LACK OF MORALS ON TV

The women's Sunday School class of Oyster Bay Baptist Church, Gulf Shores, is concerned with the possible negative influence of the many TV shows featuring naked people. We seriously doubt anyone would find any redeeming social value in any of these shows.

What is the lesson on morality that our children are learning by being subjected to such misinformation? After all, God did furnish fig leaves for Adam and Eve when the time became apparent that man and woman could not obey. Are modern men and women any different?

How can a nation so obsessed with nudity be taken seriously by the nations of the world?

Our request of Alabama Baptists is that they might join us in objecting to these shows.

Delora M. McLaughlin
Gulf Shores, Ala.

RESPECT POLICE OFFICERS

Dr. Terry, I loved your headline "Law Enforcement Officials Deserve Support" in the Sept. 11 issue. I feel they also deserve something else each and every time we see a law officer. I tell them "God bless you for your service."

The first time I did that was when I went to vote earlier this year. I live in Weaver and right before I finished marking my ballot a Weaver police officer came over to

sit down and mark his. I told him "God bless you for your service," and he told me that they do not get that very often.

My pastor's daughter is an officer in the Anniston Police Department. I told her what I said and she said that is true that they don't hear it very often. I promised the Lord I was going to say that to any law officer I see every time I see them.

Susan M. Jones
Weaver, Ala.

CP, MISSIONARIES

Thank you for your excellent editorial "Is Cooperation a Principle or a Convenience?" in the Oct. 2 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

The historical perspective was well done. As a retired Southern Baptist missionary I would like to make one observation. Those mega churches that send out their own missionaries fail to recognize that they are usually riding on the backs of the many smaller churches that faithfully support the Cooperative Program.

The six-day missions trip and vacation (because a 10-day trip is usually 2 days to travel, 2 days vacation and 6 days of missions work) most often depends on the career missionary supported by the Cooperative Program to arrange hotels, ground transportation, translators, a place to minister and to follow up on what was done.

I know because as a career missionary on the field supported

by the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, I have hosted those groups. Some did truly valid missions work but it could not have happened without the career missionary.

Ben E. Hope
Huntsville, Ala.

LOSING INFLUENCE

Regarding the article "Agnew shares message of Christ's love" in the Oct. 2 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, the following statement is made about Agnew's musical journey: "God is larger than any words and music is something beyond words."

Where in the Bible is this found? If this statement is true why did God use words to communicate His truth to us? Why did He not use music? This statement is simply not true.

The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation, not music, not programs, not new ideas, just the simple and profound gospel of Jesus Christ, expressed face-to-face as was always the case from the time Jesus chose His first followers and sent them out two-by-two.

Jerry Wood
West Blocton, Ala. ☞

State Youth Choir Festival hosts more than 500 students



Photo by Doug Rogers

More than 500 middle and high school students from 14 Alabama Baptist churches participate in the State Youth Choir Festival on Sept. 28 at First Baptist Church, Montgomery. The fourth annual event drew youth choirs from 10 associations ranging from Marshall Association to Covington Association, and Bethel Association to Tuskegee Lee Association. Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, "This is the perfect picture of cooperation among Alabama Baptists. ... These young people and others ... enjoyed a wonderful, spirit-filled worship experience."

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Florida Baptists halt medical marijuana facility

LAKE WALES, Fla. — A tiny Southern Baptist church snuffed out plans to open a medical marijuana facility in central Florida by rejecting an offer to lease a vacant parcel of land the company needs to comply with proposed state rules banning such operations within 1,000 feet of a church property.

At first, Bethel Baptist Church, Lake Wales, Fla., a congregation of about 15 members — many who are shut-ins and unable to attend — voted 8-0 on Aug. 24 to accept an offer to lease the 3.2-acre parcel to GrowHealthy, a company poised to become one of America's largest chains of medical marijuana nursery farms.

Pastor Marshal Kirchik told local media that GrowHealthy persuaded church members to agree to a \$500 a month lease for five years by appealing to their sympathy, telling them the product would help relieve people's pain.

After the first vote, Kirchik said the congregation got pushback from law enforcement, the Don't Let Florida Go to Pot coalition and sister churches in Ridge Baptist Association, prompting a second vote the following week, in which church members voted 5-3 to reject the deal.

Brewton-Parker College to remain accredited

MOUNT VERNON, Ga. — Brewton-Parker College (BPC) in Mount Vernon, Ga., has been notified that it will remain an accredited member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) while appealing its accreditation status.

Peter Lumpkins, vice president of communications of the Georgia Baptist Convention-affiliated school, said it had presented new material evidence demonstrating improvement in its financial position that "warranted a remand and the continuation of its accreditation. SACSCOC will continue to review the new evidence in greater detail for compliance with SACSCOC's standards."

College President Ergun Caner said, "We are thankful the appeals committee recognized what we knew all along — that Brewton-Parker College is a financially stable and viable institution of higher learning."

22-year-old Kentucky Baptist killed in Chile

TEMUCO, Chile — Kentucky Baptist Erica Faith Hagan, 22, was killed Sept. 6 while serving as a teaching assistant at a Baptist school in the southern Chilean city of Temuco.

A May 2014 college graduate, she had arrived in Chile to serve as a teaching assistant at the Colegio Bautista, a Baptist elementary and secondary school of 800 students founded in the 1920s with the help of Southern Baptists.

Chilean authorities arrested a security guard at the college Sept. 13 in connection with Hagan's death in her on-campus apartment where she had been struck by an object several times.

Hagan was a graduate of Georgetown College, in Ky. She had been a member of Hardin Baptist Church, Hardin, Ky., since 2010. ☞

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"Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily; my deep concern for all the churches." 2 Corinthians 11:28

alpastorsconference.com

'Family reunion'

Lakeside to host 192nd state convention annual meeting

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

The 192nd Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting will make its way to Birmingham in November, this time with the theme **SERVE**.

Held Nov. 11-12 at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, the annual meeting will showcase the way Alabama Baptists **SERVE** which stands for — S, starting new churches; E, evangelizing the lost; R, revitalizing churches; V, volunteering to be on mission; and E, engaging culture with the gospel.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said the meeting will be a "wonderful 'family reunion' type of experience as we gather to celebrate what God is doing through Alabama Baptists."

"We have never held the annual meeting at Lakeside Baptist," Lance said. "Pastor Greg Corbin, as well as his staff, has been most accommodating as to the responsibilities of hosting both the annual meeting and the Pastors Conference. This is no small task."

To elaborate on the theme **SERVE**, reports will be given by state Baptist entities that will "share stories

of how our Lord has used their ministries in Kingdom-impact ways," Lance said.

The schedule includes guest speaker Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, on Tuesday evening.

"Robert Smith is one of the best loved and most outstanding preachers in America," Lance said. "His humble spirit and insightful preaching ability resonates so well with Alabama Baptists. ... We are blessed to have him with us this year."

Veritas, a singing group based in Mobile, will provide music for the annual meeting. The group can do "almost any kind of music," Lance said. "They are at home with the contemporary genre and the classical hymns as well."

Two theme interpretation sermons will be presented and Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, will provide the annual sermon. John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church and ABSC president, will give his president's address.

"Jesus has called us to be His servants," Lance said. "As servants for Him, we can make an eternal difference in people's lives. I encourage you to make every effort to attend this year's annual meeting as we consider the multitude of opportunities we have as Alabama Baptists to **SERVE**." ❧

SERVE

**2014 ALABAMA BAPTIST
STATE CONVENTION
ANNUAL MEETING**

**Nov. 11-12
Lakeside Baptist Church,
Birmingham**

For information on the annual meeting, including schedule, hotel information, auxiliary meetings and messenger cards, visit www.abscannualmeeting.org.

REFLECTIONS



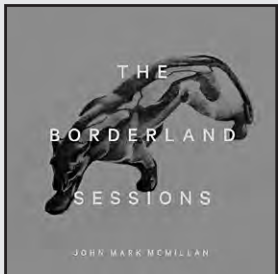
TOP 10

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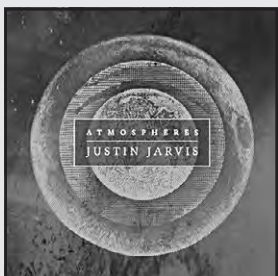
1. **Banner (Deluxe Version)**
By Desperation Band



2. **The Borderland Sessions**
By John Mark McMillan



3. **WOW Hits 2015 (Deluxe Version)**
By Various artists



4. **Atmospheres**
By Justin Jarvis



5. **RUN WILD. LIVE FREE. LOVE STRONG.**
By for KING & COUNTRY



6. **The Undoing**
By Steffany Gretzinger

7. **Foreign Land**
By 3 Winans Brothers

8. **How Can It Be – EP**
By Lauren Daigle

9. **Welcome to the New**
By MercyMe

10. **The Worship Initiative, Vol. 8**
By Shane & Shane

Source: iTunes at press time



Photo courtesy of BEC Recordings

Lead singer of The Museum, Ben Richter, hopes “that our music and our journey as a band are simply the things we leave behind to show that God has changed us from the inside out.”

Changed from the inside out

The Museum aims to spark revolution that changes lives

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The Christian band known as “The Museum” is doing more than just displaying works of art or historical artifacts. They are displaying the love of Christ to a world in desperate need of the gospel.

In 2008, the band selected this name after drummer Josh Kirk shared about a missions trip to Romania and told how the experience affected his walk with God. While in Romania, Kirk had the opportunity to visit the Revolution Museum and also performed at a large Christian gathering in the same town square where communism had been overthrown in 1989.

“We decided that our band would be called The Museum because we hope that our music and those we share it with can be the evidence that Christ has done a revolution in our hearts,” Kirk said.

The band maintains a busy schedule leading worship and performing at Christian music festivals, conferences, camps and other events. As the band travels, they hope to witness — and perhaps spark — a revolution that changes lives for the glory of God.

Lead singer Ben Richter said, “After hearing the music and messages about Christ’s love and forgive-

ness, we hope that people will realize that Christ has a promise for each of our lives. I’ve seen so many people throw their lives away to things that are not eternal, so we really want to remind people that Christ came so we can have life more abundantly.

“We really want to let people know that they don’t have to believe the lies that Satan is throwing at them. I once heard: ‘Sin will take you farther than you want to go, cost you more than you’re willing to pay and keep you longer than you’re willing to stay.’ For whatever reason that expression has stuck with me since I was 14 years old and now serves as a reminder about the importance of communicating messages to teenagers and young adults about honoring Christ with words and actions.”

Based on the theme of Micah 6:8, their album “What We Stand For” emphasizes the importance of raising awareness for social justice and inspiring people to take action. The band’s concerts also benefit missions organizations such as Compassion International and the anti-slavery ministry, Not For Sale.

“Just as people store up things of significance in a museum, we hope that our music and our journey as a band are simply the things we leave behind to show that God has changed us from the inside out,” Richter said. “We want to show that He’s done a revolution in our hearts and we will never be the same.”



“We want to show that He’s done a revolution in our hearts and we will never be the same.”

Ben Richter
lead singer, The Museum



Graphic by Lauren C. Grim

'I'd rather DIE'

Christian schoolgirl recounts escape from Boko Haram militants

Saa sat with other schoolgirls piled on the back of the large truck as it made its way past a Nigerian village in the dark of night.

"We are moving, we are moving, then some of our girls start jumping down from the trucks. Then I told my friend that I decided to jump down from the trucks, that I'd rather die, that my parents have my coffin buried, than to go with them because we don't know where we are going. Then she said okay, she would jump with me."

Saa and her friend — two of the 300 girls Boko Haram militants awakened and violently kidnapped from a Chibok boarding school on the early morning of April 15 — courageously escaped as the caravan of trucks continued down the road. Saa recounted her ordeal during a Sept. 19 panel discussion hosted by the Hudson Institute in Washington and supported by the Jubilee Campaign for religious freedom. The 18-year-old Christian is a member of the Nigeria Church of the Brethren, where her father was a pastor.

Jumping from the truck, her friend injured her leg and was unable to walk. Saa helped her through the forest to a tree, where the two slept for the night.

"She can't move, we don't know what to do. Then I decide to go and look for help. ... I went and I met a (Muslim) shepherd." Saa asked him for help, but he expressed fear, recommending they wait along the road and seek help from others who might pass by on their way to market.

Help from a stranger

"Then we said, 'But sir, you know that the bad people follow this way. Not any person will come to the market today because they were afraid.' ... Then he decided to help us, and he carried my friend on his bicycle." With the farmer's help, Saa and her friend returned to Chibok.

"When we come home, I met my parents crying. ... Then after that, the time they saw me, they were happy, they were jumping, because of what's happening."

As many as 75 girls escaped during the days and weeks following the kidnapping, with perhaps 220 still missing. At least one of the girls has been killed as a suicide bomber, said Emmanuel Ogebe, a Nigerian-American attorney and panelist.

Nigerian security officials are reportedly engaged in talks to free the girls, according to news reports.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has assisted in talks with Nigerian security officials and Boko Haram militants to negotiate the freedom of the girls in exchange for the release of Boko Haram prisoners, *The Telegraph* reported Sept. 18. No deal has been reached.

Since Saa escaped within 24 hours of being kidnapped, she was not able to learn where the girls were being taken. But she does recall that the militants questioned some of the girls about their faith, particularly three girls who would not fit on the trucks and were allowed to walk back home.

Within a month of the kidnapping, Boko Haram released a video of girls dressed in Muslim "hijabs," or headscarves, who were reportedly the same girls kidnapped from Chibok.

"Yes they were Christian girls, because the one that stand at the front, she was a Christian, and she was ... in our FCS (Fellowship of Christian Students)," Saa said, her eyes tearing.

Boko Haram is adopting ISIS tactics, said Nina Shea, director of Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom.

"As far as the killings go ... they're occurring on a constant basis as Boko Haram becomes more well-armed and grows," Shea said. "The Catholic Bishop (Oliver) Doeme of Borno (was quoted) as saying that there is clear confirmation that Islamization is occurring in northeastern Nigeria and probably with the intent of targeting all of Nigeria."

"What is going on is very brutal religious cleansing and it's occurring as we speak."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Saa's name changed for security reasons. (BP)



BP photo

Saa, an 18-year-old Christian schoolgirl from Chibok, Nigeria, recounts her escape from Boko Haram militants after they kidnapped her and 300 of her classmates in April.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Muslim assailants attack, kill 44 in one day

KADUNA, Nigeria — Church leaders are specifically being targeted as Muslim Fulani assailants are attacking towns in Nigeria's Kaduna state.

Two attacks took place Sept. 17 — one in Fadan Karshi, killing 13, and another in Karshin Daji, killing 31, injuring 15 and burning down 15 houses, Christian leaders in the areas reported.

Among those killed in Karshin Daji was Julius Jako, 55, pastor of Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), and Ezra Ibrahim, another pastor at the church.

Jako was slain alongside his wife, Rhoda, and their 12-year-old daughter, Hussein, in their home on the church premises, said Danjuma Awe, an elder of the ECWA congregation.

"The ... Muslim Fulani gunmen forced their way onto the church premises (and) cut [Jako], his wife and a daughter with a machete, and then tied the hands and feet of the three of them before setting the house on fire," Awe said. "The three of them were burned to ashes in the living room of the pastorate. We only found the charred remains ... the following morning."

In Fadan Karshi, Kefas Sai Wujun, archdean of the Gimi Conference of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC), said the wife of a retired pastor, 55-year-old Tina Aku, was among those killed.

All members of this once 500-member church have since fled the town, Wujun said.

Wujun said the town residents have no weapons to protect themselves, and they have only the government soldiers for any hope of security from Fulani attacks. But "even soldiers who made efforts to come to our rescue were ambushed and attacked also by the Fulanis."

Laotian Christians arrested for worshipping

BOUKHAM, Laos — Pastor Sompong Supatto and six other Christians were arrested Sept. 28 for meeting together in a worship service in the Southeast Asia country of Laos.

The chief of Boukham village in Atsaphangthong District in Savannakhet Province along with village security officials and police arrested the Christians, according to Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRF).

Christians have been assembling for corporate worship in Boukham village for more than three years, and the chief's order violates religious freedom as stipulated in the country's constitution, a HRWLRF spokesman said. Local officials had issued an order the previous Sunday, Sept. 21, that Christians in the village were no longer allowed to gather for worship but there was no explanation as to why, the spokesman added.

"The HRWLRF urges the Lao government to respect the right of the Lao people to religious freedom and the accompanying rights as guaranteed in the Lao constitution and the U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Laos in 2009, upholding the individual's right to adopt a religion/belief of choice as well as the right to manifest that religion/belief in a corporate worship (Article 18)," the HRWLRF representative said. "Any form of coercion impairing the freedom to have and manifest one's religion/belief of choice is condemned in the Covenant."

Church in Jerusalem attacked by militant group

JERUSALEM — Living Bread Church in East Jerusalem is being targeted and has been the subject of three attacks in two weeks.

On Sept. 29, young men with ties to a Palestinian militant group wired shut a church door and sprayed a gaseous substance at those inside, church sources said.

On Sept. 17, a man passing by the church's patio area opened a plastic bag containing a small gas canister inside. People on the porch fled into the church building only to find someone had pumped the same chemical spray into the worship hall, Living Bread Church leader Karen Dunham said.

No one was injured in either attack, but Dunham suffered a broken wrist in a Sept. 21 assault by young men from the same group. ☩