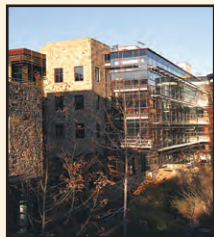


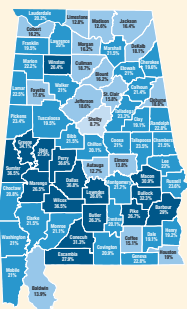


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'SENDING center'

Newly formed Grace Connection ministers to Tuscaloosa's multihousing communities

By Neisha Fuson
The Alabama Baptist

What started as a one-time fill-in sermon by Rick Davis turned in to a full-time pastorate, a new mission for a church that was dying and a passion for reaching the lost that spread throughout the congregation.

In January, Davis was serving as pastor of the rural Fleetwood Baptist Church, Peterson, where he'd been for 18 years. But something in his heart was calling him to urban ministry, specifically multihousing communities in Tuscaloosa. He wanted to reach out to the 65 percent of the city's most neglected population that live in apartment complexes, trailer parks, condo communities and so on.

The North American Mission Board estimates that less than 5 percent of multihousing residents are connected to a church. In Alabama that equates to being 10 times less likely to be connected to a church than for residents of a single family home.

Looking to God

"I didn't know how that was going to play out or how God was going to (use me in multihousing ministry)," Davis said, but he resigned from his stable full-time position at Fleetwood Baptist and looked to God for direction.

Davis and about a dozen Fleetwood members had the same heart for multihousing ministry and began meeting and praying together regularly.

That's Davis' half of the story. The other half involves the former Grace-

way Baptist Church, located within one-eighth mile of approximately 2,000 apartment units in Tuscaloosa.

Planted in 1992, Graceway Baptist went through a few leadership changes and a change in neighborhood demographics. But after its last pastor resigned in early 2014 the congregation declined to only 10-12 members.

Jimmy Osborn, a charter member of Graceway who served as a trustee, deacon and assistant treasurer, said the church didn't know where to turn.

Eric Boykin, missions strategist for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, stepped in to preach for Graceway and discussed different options with the members as they looked to the future. At the same time, Davis had told Boykin he was interested in multihousing ministry and was looking for ways to get involved.

One Sunday morning in March, Boykin felt so sick he couldn't get out of bed and had to find someone to fill in for him, so he called Davis.

Osborn said, "God moves in mysterious ways because Rick came that one Sunday and never left."

After Davis preached in March he shared his heart for multihousing ministry with the members and how he hoped to find a place that would become a "sending center" into multihousing communities of Tuscaloosa.

By May, after several discussions, (See 'Tuscaloosa,' page 20)



Main photo by Bethany Rogers
Smaller photos courtesy of Rick Davis



The former Graceway Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, joined with a group of people with a heart for multihousing ministry to form Grace Connection Church and launched Oct. 12 (featured in bottom two photos). Rick Davis is pastor.

Coming next week

Alabama Baptist
State Convention
annual meeting coverage



COMMENT

Baptist Missions in Greater Boston

One church planter described the Boston area as post-Christian — a place where people think they have considered Jesus and rejected Him. The problem, the church planter said, is that most have never heard the gospel so they have never really considered Jesus at all.

Another Boston church planter said there is far less animosity toward Christianity in Boston than most people think. The problem is that most people have never met a dedicated evangelical Christian — not one.

Most of the church planters currently working in Boston agree that New Englanders are like M&M candy. They have a hard shell on the outside. But the shell is thin and once one gets through the shell, the people are friendly and accepting.

The Greater Boston area (inside the I-495 corridor) is home to about 4.9 million people. Evangelical Christians make up less than 3 percent of that population, according to information provided by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) during a recent briefing for editors of state Baptist papers.

Gallup called Boston one of the least Bible-minded cities in the nation and Massachusetts one of the least religious states with only 27 percent of residents considered very religious. Roman Catholics make up the largest religious group followed by atheists and agnostics, according to various studies.

A diverse city

Boston is a diverse area. According to the United States Census Bureau, the median household annual income is \$66,658, which is far above the U.S. average of \$51,849. Alabama's median household annual income is \$42,738.

Poverty is below the national average. Only 11 percent of people in the area live below the national poverty level compared to the U.S. average of 15 percent. In Alabama the percentage living in poverty is 16.2 percent.

It is estimated that more than 150 languages are spoken in the area. The Baptist Convention of New England (BCNE), which includes Boston, ministers in about 20 different languages through its churches. For example Southern Baptists have a church plant among the 10,000 Nepalese who live in the area. Another church plant focuses on the large Russian-speaking



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

population. Still another focuses on Koreans and other international college students studying at some of the nation's most prestigious universities.

Nine percent of the population is Hispanic, 8 percent is African-American and 7 percent is Asian.

Since Harvard University's founding in 1636 Boston has been associated with higher education. Today about a quarter of a million college students from around the world study in the Boston area. One church planter reported that within a three-mile radius of his church, 46 percent of the 400,000 people who lived there hold graduate degrees.

A church planting emphasis of BCNE to start 25 new churches each year has been augmented by Send North America: Boston, a NAMB program to reach underserved areas of the United States with the gospel of Jesus Christ through church planting.

Using a relatively new strategy, many of the church plants are taking root.

Curtis Cook, who until recently coordinated the Send North America: Boston effort, told state paper editors that Baptists did not have a good history of planting new churches in major cities. He cited many reasons — church planters not familiar with their new cultures, lack of a supporting community, loneliness, expense of church planting, lack of good coaching and poor strategies.

Work in progress

Now church plants begin with the recognition that it may take five to seven years for a church plant to become self-sustaining. A church planter may take a year or more working with a local group of Christians to determine where a church plant is needed, what kind of church it should be, learning the local culture and language before actually planting a church.

"It only takes a few mistakes to blow up the whole thing," Cook said.

Another change is putting a team around a church planter rather than having individuals work alone. Three or four families ban together

to plant a new church. Speakers explained that lay members of churches are increasingly deciding to be on mission for the Lord. One example shared was of a FedEx pilot who decided to relocate his family in order to help plant a church.

New church plants in the Boston area seldom start with a church service. No matter how much one may want to start with a presentation of the gospel, that direct approach does not get a hearing, speakers explained. Instead leaders emphasize the new churches are there to serve their communities. "It is better to do little acts of love that nudge people toward the Kingdom," one church planter observed.

Linking to partner churches from more established areas of Baptist work is another part of the new strategy. These churches frequently provide financial support, speakers said. More importantly they provide manpower to do things the few gathered believers could never accomplish alone. Often these are community service projects.

Importance of commitment

Partner churches must be committed for the length of the church planting cycle. That means multiple trips over multiple years so volunteers and the partnering church begin to know and understand the demands of the church planting experience.

Church planters not only report to NAMB on a monthly basis, they meet with each other and with coaches and mentors who help them strategize and problem solve. New churches also are required to give to the Cooperative Program and be Southern Baptist churches.

The results are impressive. A church planting culture seems to be emerging as one of the first things a new congregation does is help with another church plant.

This was my third time to see Baptist missions work in the Boston area. Each experience has been impressive. One church, for example, has offered its building as home for other churches for years. Now six other Baptist groups, most of them ethnic congregations, meet there. The concentration on student work to reach collegians in Boston and the more than 1 million college students in New England is astounding.

And now to see the explosion in church plants is exciting. Currently there are 34 church plants in the area, 20 of them started in the last four years, and more on the way.

NAMB officials were honest enough to say that not every target city in the nation shows the positive results witnessed in Boston. Still thank God for what is happening there and may it happen in other major cities of New England and across the nation. 🙏

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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

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Photo courtesy of Time, Inc.

If all goes as planned in current negotiations, then Samford University's new College of Health Sciences will eventually move to the property adjacent to campus now owned by Time, Inc., for its Southern Progress Corporation offices.

'Beyond our lifetimes'

Samford 'afforded rare opportunity to develop plans' for campus expansion

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Yes, 28 acres and 398,000 square feet of building space gives Samford University officials plenty of room to act on campus dreams. But what may have the entirety of the Samford family the most excited — at least initially — is the potential for 1,073 additional parking spaces.

"The parking is huge for us," said Betsy Holloway, Samford's chief marketing officer. "We've experienced extensive growth ... on campus. The parking is really good news to a lot of folks who worry about our expansion efforts with respect to parking."

The potential new parking spaces, building space and acreage was announced Nov. 3 — and is so close Samford leaders can literally reach out and touch it because it sits adjacent to the Lakeshore Drive campus in Homewood.

And if the next few weeks fall in line like anticipated, then Samford will acquire the property now owned by Time, Inc.

Samford originally owned the property, which was sold to Time, Inc., in 1987 to house Southern Progress Corporation. More than half of the 28 acres came to Samford in 1971 in an exchange of parcels of land with the city of Homewood so Homewood High School could be built at its present location on the south side of Lakeshore Drive.

Samford also originally owned the land east of the Time, Inc., property closest to Highway 31 where First Baptist Church, Birmingham,

now sits. It was sold by Samford to First, Birmingham, in 1984.

Samford's property on the south side of Lakeshore Drive, including more than what the high school now has, was deeded to Samford (then Howard College) in November 1940, according to Samford officials. Since that time — and since Samford moved from its East Lake location to Homewood in 1957 — various aspects of the property have been leased, sold and developed.

In 2006 the university re-purchased the tract where the Samford Track and Soccer Complex is now located. In February 2014 Samford purchased the 600 University Park Drive property and office building.

As far as potential for the current 318-acre campus to expand north or west, Samford is under a moratorium with the City of Homewood for no expansion in those directions until after July 2018.

But even with potential for future expansion in other directions, Samford officials said those discussions are not taking place. The focus is on the Dec. 2 board of trustees meeting in which Samford trustees will vote on the contract for the Time, Inc., property acquisition.

Ready to move

If all goes through as planned, then Southern Progress will move its operations into the easternmost building on the property. There are three buildings and the one building will be leased back to Time, Inc.

Evelyn Webster, executive vice president of Time, Inc., said in a Nov. 4 email to Southern Progress employees, "[W]e anticipate we will

move into our new accommodation by the end of 2015. ... [W]e've been working diligently to find a way to both utilize our vacant space and to create state-of-the-art facilities.

"[This] ... achieves both of these objectives and also allows us to partner with and support Samford University in their focus on delivering high quality education to its students."

While the selling price has not been disclosed, the following statement was released by Time, Inc., on Nov. 4 during an earnings phone call with analysts: "We just signed a letter of intent to sell our Birmingham ... campus, with net proceeds in excess of \$50 million ..."

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said Samford's intention is to use the property to relocate the four schools now making up the new College of Health Sciences — pharmacy, nursing, health professions and public health — under one roof. "We will develop vehicular and pedestrian access to connect the existing campus [to the new property]," he said in an email to Samford employees and students.

It will be at least 2016 before classes will be operational in the new buildings. Decisions also will have to be made about the buildings that will be vacated.

"It is important to note that we must have a reasonable revenue plan associated with the many details of these changes, and we'll resist the temptation to simply spread our existing operations over a larger footprint," he said. "We are now afforded a rare opportunity to develop plans that will influence Samford in ways that stretch far beyond our lifetimes so extraordinary wisdom will be required to guide our steps." ❧

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.

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **Clay Crum** is the new director of missions for **Alabama-Crenshaw Association**. He previously served as pastor of Magnolia Church, Lapine. He also served at Spring Hill South Church, Luverne, and Bethel Church, Georgiana. He holds an associate of arts degree from Lurleen B. Wallace Community College in Andalusia. He and his wife, Kelley, have three children.

BIBB

► **First Church, Woodstock**, will host the Blackwood Brothers in concert Nov. 18, 7 p.m. A love offering will be collected. Larry Bonner is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Ridgecrest Church, Trussville**, will have a Christmas "Boutique" to benefit adoption Nov. 22, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. More than 30 vendors will be set up at the event. A door prize also will be available. Santa pictures will be taken 10 a.m.–2 p.m. For information call 205-661-3722. Ric Camp is pastor. ► **First Church, Pleasant Grove**, will host Selah in concert Nov. 30, 6 p.m. For information call Brenda Odom at 205-744-2806. Daven Watkins is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Mount Gilead Church, Jackson**, will have a singing Nov. 15 at 6 p.m. Mount Gilead

also will hold revival services Nov. 16–20 at 6:30 nightly. William Allison is pastor.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

► **BJ Price** is the new worship pastor for **Highland Church, Florence**. His first Sunday was Nov. 9 when the church voted to affirm the search committee's recommendation. He previously served as associate minister of music for First Church, Trussville. He also led worship for the International Mission Board's annual general meeting in 2008 and 2009. He holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Jacksonville State University and is working on a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Elaine, have three children. John Brock is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Richard Bradfield** is the new church and missions development director for **Etowah Association**. He previously served as pastor of Stowers Hill Church, Attalla. He also served at Sulphur Springs Church, Trussville, and New



BRADFIELD

Lebanon Church, Odenville. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Auburn University and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Cynthia, have one child. Gary Cardwell is director of missions.

GENEVA

► **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will have a special service Nov. 23, 10 a.m. David Bradshaw will speak. Special music will be by One Voice.

LIMESTONE

► **Mays Memorial Church, Toney**, will have "Christmas Treats & Eats" on Nov. 22, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. There will be homemade décor, wreaths, gifts, door prizes, crafts, baked goods and more. For information call 256-777-9157. Anthony Perry is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Walnut Grove Church, Decatur**, will hold revival services Nov. 21–23. Friday and Saturday services will be at 6 p.m. and the Sunday service will be at 11 a.m. Phil Waldrep will speak. For information call 256-654-1160. John Bain is pastor.

SAND MOUNTAIN

► **New Home Church, Pisgah**, will have a movie-viewing service Nov. 16, 6 p.m. The movie will be "Heaven" by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. For information call 256-451-3992. David Smith is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Larry Bounds** is the new worship pastor for **North Valley Church, Odenville**. He and his wife, Erin, have two children. Chris Crain is pastor. ☞

— Clarification —

In "Anderson celebrates 20 years as pastor of Clements" in the Oct. 30 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, it was stated that the Limestone Baptist Association church gave Anderson and his wife a month-long sabbatical for rest and renewal. "The Limestone Baptist Association church" refers to Clements Baptist Church, as it is a member of Limestone Association. *The Alabama Baptist* often specifies a church's association in this way, but understands how this can be misunderstood in a quick read.

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Dana Smith



SMITH

Ebenezer Baptist Church, Stanton Chilton Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Matthew 6:34

FAVORITE HYMN: "Because He Lives"

HOBBIES: Playing piano, doing secretarial work, watching college football

FAMILY STATUS: Husband of 15 years, David Smith; twin children, Harrison and Haven

Dana Smith, 35, feels strongly about using God-given talents for ministry. As a result, she uses hers in numerous ways. She is a pianist for church services and the praise and worship band, assists with children's productions and Vacation Bible School, sings in the choir and serves on the music committee. That is in addition to being the GROW outreach director. A teacher at Maplesville High School, Smith also does secretarial work for a small business in Stanton. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Montevallo.

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

A: I have been in church all my life, with parents and Sunday School teachers as great examples.

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

A: I began taking piano lessons in elementary school. I never thought I would one day be the church pianist. I was greatly influenced by Janet Carter, our former pianist. She has always encouraged me, and I wanted to play as well as her.

Q: What does this ministry work demand?

A: We have a praise and worship band that I am a part of. We lead the worship service each week, as well as travel to different churches to lead their homecomings, fifth Sunday singings, etc. This requires many hours of practice each week by myself, as well as with the band.

Q: What do you get from this ministry work?

A: I am able to worship through my playing. I also enjoy being with each person in the praise band. With the amount of hours we spend together, we share a lot of laughs.

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

A: God gave me the talent of playing the piano and I plan to use it to witness for Him as long as I am able.

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

A: I do not know what tomorrow holds but I know Who holds tomorrow. I feel good things will come.

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

A: Jesus Christ is my Savior and has made all the difference in the world to me. I know He walks with me daily. ☞

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

REFLECTIONS



ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Lowe retires from Etowah after more than 30 years

After ministering with Etowah Baptist Association for more than 30 years, Dianne Lowe is retiring effective Dec. 31.

Lowe began her ministry with Etowah Association as a ministry assistant to then-director of missions George Y. Williams, moving into the role of church and community ministries director in 1986.



LOWE

Lowe also served as co-director in the creation of the Etowah Baptist Missions Center; chairman of Etowah County Disaster Relief Long Term Recovery Committee; former site coordinator for Christian Women's Job Corps of Etowah County and Woman's Missionary Union director at White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City, among other positions.

Gary Cardwell, director of missions for Etowah Association, said, "Her passion for missions and how missions impacts lives right here in Etowah County, throughout North America and around the world has been at the forefront of her ministry."

Lowe said, "It has been such a pleasure to serve the Lord in this capacity. ... I look forward to some travel and lots of volunteer work in continued service to my Lord." (Maggie Walsh)

Sage Avenue, Mobile, becomes 3Circle's 4th campus

Sage Avenue Baptist Church, Mobile, voted Sept. 8 to change its name but keep its purpose and merge with 3Circle Church, Fairhope. Currently in a transition period, Sage Avenue Baptist will hold its first service as 3Circle Midtown Church on Jan 25. This merge will create the fourth campus of 3Circle Church.

Phil Boyles, pastor of Sage Avenue since 2010, said the search for revitalization began about a year ago and the decision to explore the option of partnering with an existing church resulted in discussions with Chris Bell, pastor of 3Circle Church.

To prepare for the launch of the Midtown campus, Sage Avenue hosted members of 3Circle from all campuses Nov. 2 for Vision Night. Bell said the service was a time for members of Sage Avenue to "understand and feel that they're a part of a big family."

The Nov. 17 opening of The Hope Center, a medical and counseling center for the uninsured and underinsured; a community-wide Dec. 7 dinner; and a Jan. 17 community block party also are a part of the re-launching preparations. (Maggie Walsh)

Salem-Troy Association marks 175 years



Photo by Joey Meredith

Salem-Troy Baptist Association celebrated its 175th annual meeting Oct. 27 at St. John Baptist Church, Brundidge. Pictured here, Lonette Berg (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presents Director of Missions Kenneth Baggett with a commemorative plaque for the association's years of ministry.

Voting results

Social conservatives see mixed responses on initiatives

Voters gave the Republican Party a majority in the U.S. Senate in the Nov. 4 mid-term election, but the response was mixed on several state initiatives backed by social conservatives.

Tennessee approved an amendment that will give more power to state lawmakers to regulate and restrict abortion, adding language to the Tennessee constitution that reads in part: "Nothing in this Constitution secures or protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of an abortion," even in the case of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest or when necessary to save the life of the mother.

Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Director Randy Davis expressed gratefulness for voters' support of Amendment 1, which allows the legislature to regulate abortion in the state. The amendment won with 52.6 percent of the vote in a race that was considered a toss-up when the polls opened.

"I think Tennessee has begun the process of no longer being the destination for abortions in the Southeast," Davis said. "I'm very thankful that Tennesseans stood up for life. They showed up to vote and I'm very proud of our laymen and pastors that became engaged in the political process over this issue."

Voters in Colorado and North Dakota, however, defeated pro-life amendments. In Colorado voters rejected a proposal to add "unborn human beings" to the state's criminal code, a measure that some feared could ban abortion.

In North Dakota voters rejected a "right-to-life" state constitutional amendment that abortion rights advocates feared would have ended legal abortions there. The North Dakota measure would have declared "the inalienable right to life of every human being at every stage of development must be recognized and protected."

Still Southern Baptists in Colorado view the election of pro-life U.S. Senate candidate Cory Gardner as a victory for unborn children and North Dakotans will continue to proclaim the value of life from conception, leaders said.

Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the election illustrates "the pro-life issue persists and can win," which he deemed the "most important aspect" of Election Day 2014.

"Candidates who articulated explicitly their commitment to life won and those who expected to use abortion as a 'wedge issue' to benefit the 'pro-choice' cause lost," Moore said. "We should pray now that the newly elected Congress and the president will be able to work together for just policies that protect and promote human dignity, family stability and religious liberty."

Voters in Alaska, Oregon and the District of Columbia approved pro-marijuana initiatives. Oregon's measure, modeled on Washington state's, will allow adults to buy marijuana for recreational use. A household can have up to 8 ounces of marijuana and cultivate up to four plants; consumption is banned in public. Alaska also legalized marijuana for recreational use.

Voters in Florida rejected a constitutional amendment that would have allowed doctors to prescribe

marijuana for the relief of chronic pain, nausea and other symptoms associated with eight major diseases. The measure required a vote of 60 percent in favor of passage but received 58 percent.

In Arkansas, Alaska, South Dakota and Nebraska, voters approved hiking the minimum wage. Voters in Illinois approved a nonbinding ballot question on raising the minimum wage.

The election leaves President Barack Obama without a Democratic-controlled chamber in Congress for the first time since his presidency began nearly six years ago. Conservatives see the change as an opportunity.

Rep. James Lankford, a Republican who has served four years in the House, said religious liberty — which is increasingly being challenged in conjunction with same-sex "marriage" and mandatory abortion coverage with health care plans — is a priority for him.

"People that have faith should be free to be able to live their faith in the workplace, at home, wherever they are," Lankford said in a post-election webcast hosted by Family Research Council on Nov. 5. "So whether you are a chaplain in the military, whether you are a small business or a large business and choose to live and practice your business by biblical practices or

whether you are just an individual trying to make decisions ... and do it by biblical practices, that is your free choice as an American, and we've got to find ways to be able to protect that."

Lankford, a Southern Baptist, was director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center for 13 years before his 2010 election to the House.

Daniel Cox, research director at the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), said conservative Christians had an outsized influence in the 2014 elections because, among other reasons, deeply conservative states claimed a particularly large proportion of Senate races, with Democrats losing in Arkansas, North Carolina and Georgia, among other states.

Add to that the unpopularity of President Obama and the fact that older — read "more conservative" — voters turn out in higher proportions during mid-terms.

'Home-field advantage'

"Evangelicals were playing on their home turf," Cox said. "They had home-field advantage because they were competing in states where they make up a much larger proportion of the population."

But while "patterns of voting among religious voters is fairly stable ... and is unlikely to change in the near future," Cox continued, evangelicals may see their influence dwindle in the not-too-distant future.

Millennials — Americans ages 18 to 29 — are less likely to identify as evangelicals and much less likely to vote, according to PRRI and other surveys.

"In 2020 the entire millennial generation will be of voting age," Cox said. "They are not voting in large numbers now. But they will. You settle down and you start voting more regularly." (BP, RNS)

"People that have faith should be free to be able to live their faith in the workplace, at home, wherever they are."

Rep. James Lankford

“We will never see an end to the plague of poverty by offering a deeper dependence on a flawed government system. We will never help our poorest citizens or our future generations by casting over them the net of federal government giveaway programs.”

Governor Robert Bentley

never help our poorest citizens or our future generations by casting over them the net of federal government giveaway programs. We can break the cycle of poverty but not with programs that drag our communities and our people into the downward spiral of dependence,” Bentley said.

However, advocates for the poor say that safety net programs can make all the difference in lifting Alabama families out of poverty.

Carol Gundlach, policy analyst for tax and budget issues for Arise Citizens’ Policy Project (ACPP), said, “Look at the number of people who are working full- or part-time in the state and still have to be on Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program and food stamps. Someone could work full-time at minimum wage and still not be able to support their family.” ACPP is a statewide, non-partisan coalition that promotes public policy benefiting low-income Alabamians.

‘Safety net’

Gundlach said the “safety net” of government-funded health and housing programs is critical to helping low-income Alabamians escape poverty. Critics who argue against efforts to help the poor such as increasing the minimum wage often assume an individual or family is taking advantage of multiple assistance programs, which is usually not the case, Gundlach said. Even in those families who do receive multiple benefits the money often runs out before the end of the month, creating a burden especially on children.

“Poverty is terrible on children,” Gundlach said.

Policy changes can make a difference, said Melanie Bridgeforth, executive director of VOICES for Alabama’s Children, a statewide group that works to promote advocacy for children’s issues. She points to programs like Social Security and Medicare, which were aimed at helping poor seniors. The result is that poverty among seniors has declined in the last 50 years, she said. Programs aimed at helping children in poverty could have a similar effect on future generations of Alabamians, she said.

“It is evident that policy change can change the trajectory of a subset of the population,” Bridgeforth said. “From a policy perspective, moving forward we need the same robust effort into changes for children. We absolutely have come a long way, but there’s still much to be done.”

‘Moral justice ISSUE’

Alabama organizations fighting root causes of poverty

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For approximately 900,000 Alabamians, poverty is a way of life.

Some have always been poor but others have experienced financial setbacks from a job loss, illness or disability. These are not choices, said Melanie Bridgeforth, executive director of VOICES for Alabama’s Children, a statewide group that works to promote advocacy for children’s issues.

“We need to change the conversation around poverty,” she said. “It’s not necessarily that people are doing something wrong.”

Recent recession

Though poverty has been a consistent problem in the state, the recession hit many families hard, said Kristina Scott, executive director of Alabama Possible, a nonprofit organization that works to reduce systemic poverty.

“Our partners see folks who don’t have a lot of hope that they are ever going to feel economically secure,” Scott said.

“Their employment outlook is not changing, they are making less money and they are stuck in a pattern of living day to day without enough to support themselves.”

There is a general belief that regardless of circumstances people who try hard enough can improve their financial situation, said Craig Baab, senior fellow for policy development at Alabama Appleseed, an organization that advocates policy reforms to help low-income and other vulnerable citizens in the state.

“That attitude is prevalent but it is not realistic,” Baab said.

The high number of working poor is evidence of that, said Carol Gundlach, policy analyst for Arise Citizens’ Policy Project (ACPP), a nonpartisan coalition that promotes public policy benefiting low-income Alabamians.

“Someone could work full time at minimum wage and still not be able to support their family,” she said.

“It’s a moral justice issue. It seems like we should reward work and people who are willing to work to support their families with at least adequate income so that they’re not in poverty when they’re working full time.”

It is especially important to talk about

what poverty does to children, Bridgeforth said. Since poverty often is characterized by unstable resources it creates a stressful environment for children. Children cannot get themselves out of poverty so they need resources in place to help them.

“The fact of growing up in poverty can be a poison to a child’s development.

If you want to break the cycle you have to help the children [get] on the right path,” Bridgeforth said. “Investing early in children pays dividends.”

Education is one way out of poverty, (See ‘Poverty,’ page 8)

“The fact of growing up in poverty can be a poison to a child’s development.”

**Melanie Bridgeforth
executive director,
VOICES for Alabama’s Children**

The poverty line in 2013 was \$23,834 for a family of four.

Poverty Rate in Alabama

18.7 percent

Percentage of people in the state with income below the official poverty line.

Child Poverty Rate in Alabama

27 percent

Percentage of children under 18 in the state living in related families with income below the official poverty line.

Poverty Rate for Working-Age Women in Alabama

20.2 percent

Percentage of working-age women (ages 18–64) with income below the official poverty line.

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS/<http://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/alabama-2014-report>)

WAR ON POVERTY

'POVERTY is demography not destiny'

'Growing up in poverty does not mean that one's path is set,' expert says

(continued from page 7)

which is why Bridgeforth and other advocates for the poor praise the state's expanded pre-kindergarten education program.

"When we look at what is being done to combat poverty in Alabama, Pre-K is one of the most important accomplishments," Bridgeforth said. "It's an example of the governor, Legislature and businesses coming together to do something right."

Another success was Alabama's comprehensive landlord-tenant act passed in 2007, Baab said. The legislation "leveled the playing field for tenants and landlords" and improved housing stability for lower income residents whose cost for housing is a much higher percentage of their income than for wealthier Alabamians, he said.

Despite the successes, however, there is still much to be done.

"Poverty is such a broad issue that just about anything you can touch on ultimately either keeps people in poverty or makes it very difficult to get out," he said.

For example the rapid expansion of businesses that provide payday loans and title

lending is still a major concern in the state. Alabama is one of 32 states that permit loans at triple digit interest rates or with no cap at all, according to the Consumer Federation of America. Such businesses offer poor people cash that they are never able to pay off thus keeping them in poverty, Baab said.

Medicaid coverage

Another concern is the state's refusal to expand Medicaid coverage to more than 300,000 uninsured Alabamians. The result of this policy will be more uninsured people seeking care at emergency rooms and poorer overall health for those who cannot afford adequate health care, Baab said.

"Over the next five years we are leaving \$9 billion on the table that should be in our state. Those are our tax dollars not a wind-fall," Baab said.

Finally Baab points to Alabama's failure to exempt groceries from state sales tax, which affects low-income residents more significantly than wealthier ones. Alabamians pay sales tax on groceries just as they

do on other household items and the tax rate is high throughout the state. The state has the 6th highest sales tax rate in the nation with an average combined tax rate of 8.51 percent (4 percent state tax and 4.51 percent average local tax rate), according to the Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan research think tank based in Washington.

"For the well-off the percentage of income paid for groceries is much smaller than someone who is barely getting by on a poverty-level income of \$24,000 for a family of four," Baab said.

Addressing conditions that keep people in poverty is essential to improving the financial outlook for poor Alabamians, especially the 300,000 children in the state who live in poverty. There is a need for jobs, for education and for diplomas, Bridgeforth said, but there is a need for hope as well.

"Poverty is demography not destiny," Bridgeforth said. "Growing up in poverty does not mean that one's path is set."

"Alabama children can succeed and at the end of the day if our children are successful so is the state of Alabama." ■

Poverty by age

Alabama

Children 0-18
27 percent

Adults 19-64
15 percent

Adults 65+
10 percent

Total
18 percent

United States

Children 0-18
20 percent

Adults 19-64
13 percent

Adults 65+
10 percent

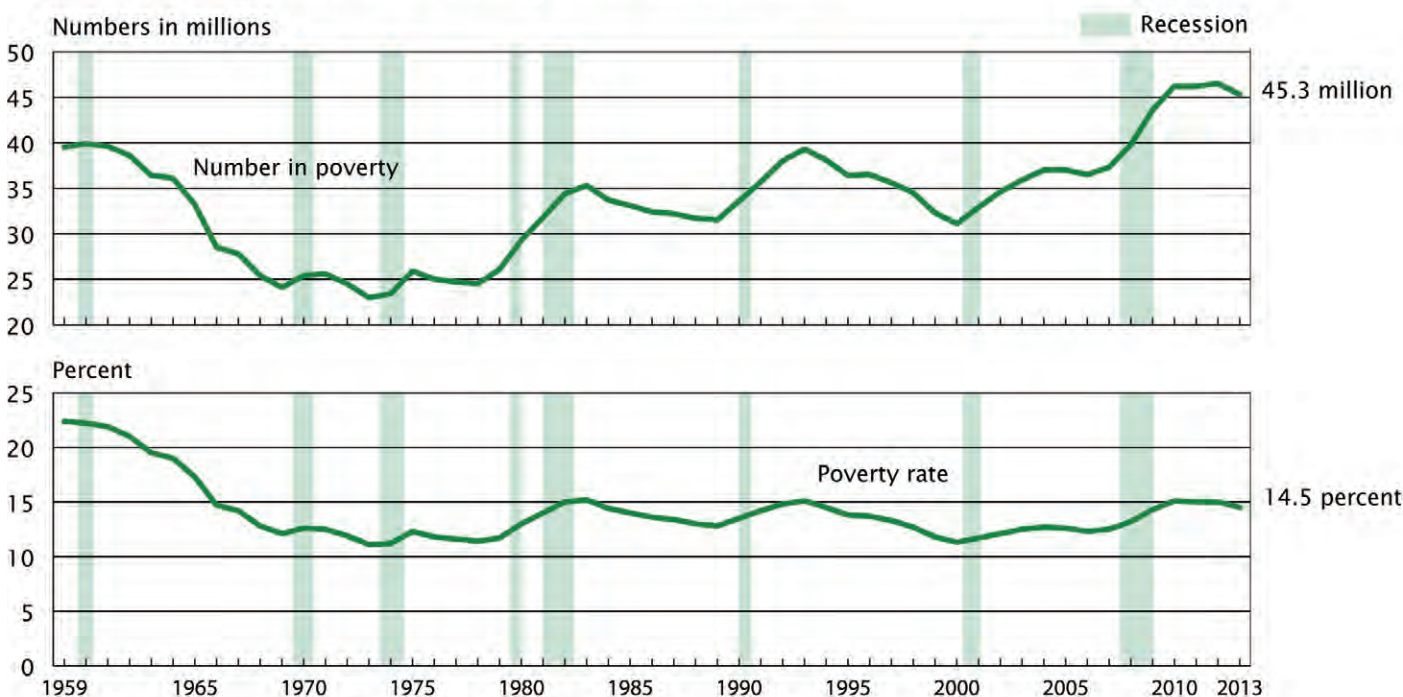
Total
15 percent

Source: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

"Alabama children can succeed and at the end of the day if our children are successful so is the state of Alabama."

Melanie Bridgeforth
executive director,
VOICES for Alabama's
Children

Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2013



Note: The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[ftp://ftp2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar14.pdf](http://ftp2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar14.pdf)>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2014 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Therapy of Thanksgiving

In 1621 the pilgrims at Plymouth suffered from the discouraging invasion of disease and death. Nearly half of the pilgrims had died. Consequently in the fall of 1621 some suggested a service of mourning for the dead. However, wiser voices prevailed and the pilgrim leaders constructed a time of worship and thanksgiving for God's blessings.

Instead of descending into depression by focusing upon their losses, those faithful Christ-followers ascended into the spiritual therapy of praise and thanksgiving by "forgetting not His many benefits." (Ps. 103:2). Gov. William Bradford decreed a day of therapeutic thanksgiving because when you raise your praise it will lift your spirit into God's healing presence.

The key to happiness is a grateful heart. Some people walk through life grumbly hateful. With God's help you can switch to humbly grateful.

God's Word prescribes the therapy of thanksgiving: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:19-20).

The rapper named Ice Cube provides a provocative prescription: "You better check yourself before you wreck yourself." As we approach the Thanksgiving season check yourself. Are you happy, content and fulfilled? If the answer is "no," then let's do a check-up from the neck up and get rid of your stinkin' thinkin'.

Feeling of entitlement

The prevailing attitude of our current culture seems to be entitlement. Legions of people develop the toxic attitude of ingratitude because they erroneously feel entitled to virtually everything. They suffer under the delusion the world "owes them" the biggest and best.

Others go beyond entitlement into self-sufficient arrogance and live with the infected attitude akin to the television character Bart Simpson who offered this sick prayer before a family meal, "Dear God, we paid for all this stuff ourselves. So thanks for nothing." Choose to move from arrogance and entitlement into the healthy mindset of

By Jay Wolf, D.Min.

Jay Wolf is senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and a member of the International Mission Board trustees. He has served in various leadership positions in Alabama Baptist life.



gratitude by following God's guidelines for implementing the therapy of thanksgiving.

1. When do you give thanks? Always.

Paul's perspective is impressive because he was not speaking from a luxurious resort or a penthouse suite. Instead the great missionary wrote from prison. Paul was often without his health, comforts, friends and freedom; but he was never without a thankful heart.

Strive to develop a consistent reflex of thanksgiving which enables you to praise God in every season and circumstance. David declared, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be on my lips" (Ps. 34:1). You will praise God continually when you intentionally become a blessing detective who magnifies the positive assets you enjoy and minimizes your liabilities and frustrations.

2. What do you give thanks for? All things.

Did God really inspire Paul to prescribe gratitude for the terrible things that crash into us? Should we be grateful for a health crisis, a financial setback, the loss of a job or the death of a loved one? God is not prescribing a pseudo-gratitude for tragedy, but He does invite us to trust that His power is bigger than our problem.

When you trust that your Heavenly Father's ability can trump your disability, profound gratitude is the natural result. The ultimate example is the cross which was transformed by God's power from an ugly executioner's tool into the beautiful bridge that leads to eternal life. Remember we serve a God who is "able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine according to the power that is at work within us" (Eph. 3:20). Our gracious King Jesus can transform our troubles and tragedies into an opportunity to bring

glory to His name and draw us closer to His heart.

Fanny Crosby lost her eyesight to a doctor's mistake when she was a child. She became a faithful follower of Christ who wrote thousands of hymns that have blessed God's family. Crosby explained, "God permitted my blindness so that He could shut me up with Himself." Gratitude is not a child of circumstances but of faith. Because we trust God's provision we choose to thank Him for our gain or pain. "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:18).

3. Why do you give thanks? Because Jesus wins.

God's Word declares, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my brethren, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always abound in the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:57-58). Since Jesus has already won the victory, you are not this world's victim. Ultimate victory is not determined by your current circumstances but by your eternal relationship to the living Lord.

'The Divine Yes'

The great missionary to India, E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973), authored 30 books, influenced Gandhi and played a key role in moving India toward democracy. On Dec. 7, 1971, Jones suffered a paralyzing stroke. He was broken physically but not spiritually. He told his daughter, "I cannot die until I write my last book, which will be entitled 'The Divine Yes.'"

He further explained, "I am so grateful God gave me this stroke so I can validate with my life everything I have preached. The stroke spoke to me a shattering 'no'; but I still have the divine yes of Jesus. I have discovered that I may fail in these earthly tasks, but it makes no difference because my relationship to Jesus gives me the ultimate victory."

We will suffer pain, hardship, hurt and defeat, yet through our relationship to Jesus we possess real purpose, peace, power and ultimate victory.

The dark seeds of discouragement will grow virtually anywhere except in a grateful heart that daily engages in the therapy of thanksgiving. 🙏

Appeals court upholds state marriage laws

A federal appeals court upheld state laws that refuse to recognize same-sex "marriage" Nov. 6, seemingly preparing the way for the U.S. Supreme Court to decide a contentious issue it has avoided so far.

In a 2-1 opinion, a panel of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati ruled four states — Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee — did not violate the U.S. Constitution by limiting marriage to the union of a man and a woman. The decision conflicts with rulings by four other federal appeals courts that struck down state laws that refused to recognize gay "marriage."

The same-sex couples who lost could ask for "en banc" review of the ruling, which would include all the members of the Sixth Circuit Court, or they could appeal to the Supreme Court. If they take the latter course and the justices grant review, the high court could issue a decision on the constitutionality of same-sex "marriage" before its current term ends next summer.

Southern Baptist support

Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, said, "We applaud the decision of ... the court, breaking a string of decisions by activist judges and courts who have imposed their personal belief systems on the public."

President Russell D. Moore of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission said in a statement, "This circuit split means that the Supreme Court's ignoring of this issue will not be able to continue. The people of the states have the right to recognize marriage ... as the union of a man and a woman. The Supreme Court should affirm this right for all fifty states." (BP)

October CP over budget projection

Contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) in October were 17.69 percent above last year's opening month of the convention's fiscal year, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Frank S. Page.

As of Oct. 31, gifts received by the EC for distribution through the Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget totaled \$16,019,180.85, or \$2,407,746.71 above the \$13,611,434.14 received October 2013.

Meanwhile designated giving of \$3,403,210.15 during October was 6.21 percent, or \$198,976.91, above gifts of \$3,204,233.24 received October 2013.

The October 2014 total is 2.25 percent above the \$15,666,666.67 monthly allocation budget projection to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America.

Month-to-month swings reflect a number of factors, including the timing of when the state conventions forward the national portion of CP contributions to the EC and the percentage of CP contributions forwarded by to the SBC state conventions after shared ministry expenses are deducted. (BP)

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

Samford homecoming

Alumni, students celebrate with weekend of events

Samford University alumni and students celebrated homecoming Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 with a busy weekend of events.

Earlier in the week, students had elected seniors Hannah Newman, of Murfreesboro, Tenn., and John Hunsicker, of St. Louis, Mo., to serve as homecoming queen and king.

The homecoming court also included freshmen Mary Helen Douglas and James William Miley III; sophomores Mackenzie Brooke Davis and Dillard Goodpasture Adams III; juniors

Mary Leslie Prater and Corry Mulligan; and seniors Christine Paige Carrier, Emily Kelley, Clay Hubbard and Will Yarborough.

Returning alumni enjoyed many opportunities to reminisce. At several programs individuals were saluted for service to the school, professional achievements and other life-time milestones.

The annual alumni banquet recognized four outstanding graduates.

Alumni of the Year honorees were Birmingham business-

woman and philanthropist Brenda Mitchell Hackney, class of 1990, MBA 1994; Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Helen Shores Lee, a 1985 Cumberland School of Law graduate; and Atlanta, Ga., entrepreneur Bryan K. Owens, class of 1981. Houston Estes, a 2004 graduate and insurance executive in Nashville, was named young alumnus of the year.

Wall of Fame

Samford's department of journalism and mass communication (JMC) added four new members to its Wall of Fame.

The new inductees are Jack Brymer, a veteran denominational journalism and communications specialist; Carol Guthrie, head of the Washington Center for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development; Tony Hale, an Emmy Award-winning actor in the "Arrested Development" and "Veep" television sitcoms; and Debbie McGrady, retired administrative assistant in the JMC department.

Brymer, a 1967 graduate, was the first managing editor of *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper and later served as editor of *The Florida Baptist Witness*. He served in the Samford communications department from 1994 until his retirement in 2003 and continues to write for the school.

Members of the class of 1964 took time at their 50th anniversary luncheon to honor a revered professor, Sigurd F. Bryan. Rick White, of Cullman, the 1964 senior class president, announced that the class had raised funds for a special donation to the Sigurd F. Bryan scholarship fund for religion students.

"He was instrumental in the lives of many members of our class," White said of Bryan, a 1946 Samford graduate who taught religion at the school for 46 years before retiring in 2002. Bryan was on hand to accept well wishes from the anniversary class.

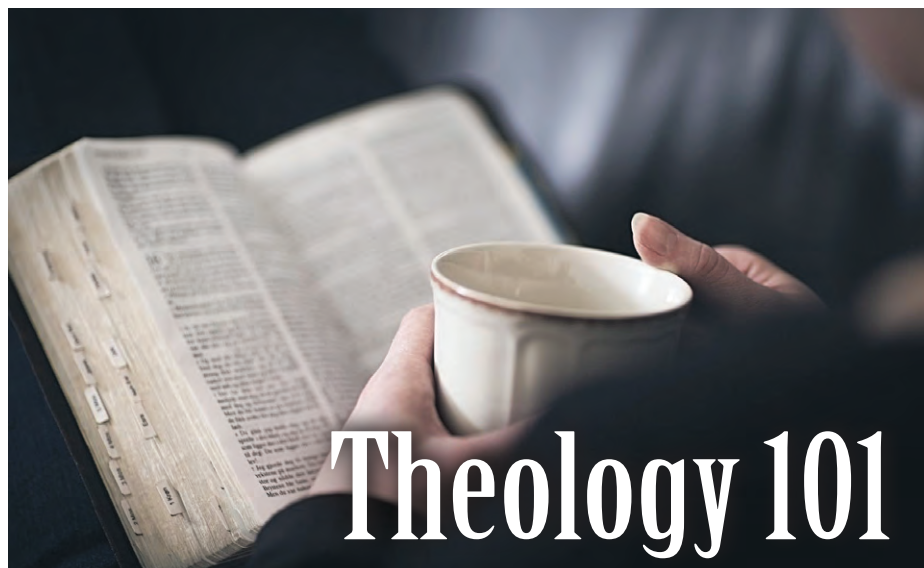
Members of the classes from 1964 and earlier convened Oct. 31 for the annual Golden Bulldog luncheon. The customary David Lockmiller awards were given to the male and female graduates present from the earliest classes. This year's winners were Joe Goode, class of 1952, of Clanton, and Anne Fadely Anderson, class of 1953, of Roebuck Springs.

The Samford football team earned a 55-0 homecoming win over the Concordia College Hornets. The win ties Samford head coach Pat Sullivan with former coach Terry Bowden for the most wins in program history with 45. Prior to the game, Sullivan and his family were honored with the dedication of the Sullivan-Cooney Family Field House. (Samford)



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Samford University students elected seniors Hannah Newman (left), of Murfreesboro, Tenn., and John Hunsicker, of St. Louis, Mo., to serve as homecoming queen and king.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Living

Walking Wisely (Part 2 of 3)

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

Good theology is not merely for theoretical understanding of God's ways or astute explanations of God's truth as revealed in Scripture. Although these are involved, good theology is that which enriches practical living and everyday behavior so that God's truth enables sincere Christian living or, as our Ephesians 5:15-21 passage puts it, enables a wise Christian walk. In addition to being careful, walking wisely includes "making the best use of the time" (v. 16a).

Misuse of time

What are some of the unwise ways we sometimes use time? When someone asks us what we are doing, have you ever heard yourself reply, "Oh, I am just wasting time." Or maybe saying, "I am just marking time." The response that says, "I am just killing time," sounds like the most unwise of all misuses of time. Since our daily lives are bound by time, killing some time is like taking a part of someone's life — our own. Such responses are often given when we are anticipating something important to occur, while the present pales into insignificance by comparison with what we hope is about to unfold. When we think about it, life is composed of time. Our allotment of time is limited, whether it be measured by decades, years or days. Do we really want to waste the "stuff" of which our lives are made? Is it the way of wisdom to spend our days just marching in place? A wise Christian walk redeems the time, choosing not to waste it. To redeem time means to buy up life's opportune moments, taking advantage of our days by living and choosing wisely.

Part of the motivation for making wise use of our time is the recognition that "the days are evil" (v. 16b). Encroaching evil dictates we put our allotted time to wise and productive use. Simply coasting in neutral for days or even hours is an unwise way to use up

segments of one's life. Wasting time, of course, is not to be confused with recreational or relaxing time, which can be a wise investment when life becomes hectic or when pressures mount.

Another dimension of walking wisely is that of understanding "what the will of the Lord is" (v. 17). Is it not foolish for a Christian to live out his or her days ignoring God's will? Given our limited knowledge and God's complete knowledge, the wisest path to follow is that of His will. Wise Christians through the centuries have posed the same question the apostle Paul asked before he was ever an appointed apostle, missionary traveler, church planter or Scripture writer. In the early moments of his Christian conversion, Paul asked, "Lord what do You want me do?" (Acts 9:6). It's a wise question for all of us. To live out one's Christian life without ever becoming serious about the will of the Lord is the height of folly. Whatever God wants any of us to do, we can never come up with a wiser choice on our own.

Best use of time

As the theme of walking wisely continues to unfold in Ephesians 5:15-21, we have to this point noted we walk wisely when we do so carefully, when we make the best use of the time and when we seek to understand what the will of the Lord is. Next time our passage will add even more aspects of living wisely. 📖

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.



VOICE YOUR OPINION

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

Remember to:

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

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



Reflecting on America's first 'celebrity' on the 300th anniversary of his birth

He preached at least 18,000 times to perhaps 10 million people. George Whitefield (1714-1770) was the best-known evangelist in Britain and America during the 18th century. Preaching throughout the colonies to large crowds, he has been called America's first "celebrity."

This year is the 300th anniversary of Whitefield's birth.

Born Dec. 16, 1714, in his father's inn in Gloucester, England, he was the seventh child of Thomas and Elizabeth Whitefield.

At an early age he found a passion for acting. He used his talent later in his dramatic preaching.

In 1732 he entered Pembroke College, Oxford, as a servitor, the highest rank of students at Oxford. In return for free tuition he served as a minister to up-

perclassmen. His duties included tasks such as carrying their books and assisting with written assignments. With John and Charles Wesley he founded the evangelical movement that became Methodism.

After years of seeking salvation through severe discipline and good works, Whitefield became ill. In 1735 after reading Henry Scougal's "The Life of God in the Soul of Man," he cried out to the Lord to save him. Years later he declared, "Whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to the spot where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me and gave me the new birth."

After getting his degree that year he was ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church and preached his first sermon in his hometown. He substituted in the pulpit for several friends and preached in London

and Bristol. Thousands packed churches to hear him.

In 1738 he sailed to America, serving as a missionary for three months in Georgia. Back in England he was ordained a priest.

Unlike Anglican ministers who emphasized ritual, Whitefield preached repentance and conversion — that one must experience a new birth through faith in Christ. Many opponents criticized him and churches closed their doors to him. He began preaching outdoors and soon tens of thousands came to hear him.

From 1739 to 1741 he returned to America and preached to thousands as part of the spiritual revival that was known as the "Great Awakening." He met Benjamin Franklin and they became lifetime friends. Franklin once calculated that more than 30,000 people could

hear Whitefield in an open-air meeting.

He visited America seven times, drawing great crowds and newspaper coverage. Estimates are that 80 percent of Americans heard him at least once. He also made 14 journeys to Scotland and two to Ireland where he was almost killed by a mob.

He married widow Elizabeth James in 1741. They lost a 4-month-old son, John, in 1744.

Preaching until the end

While on his last tour in America, the frail 55-year-old Whitefield preached the day before his death. On Sept. 30, 1770, he died in the parsonage of Old South Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Mass. A New England newspaper reported 12,000 people attended his funeral at the church. He is buried in a crypt under the pulpit. ☞



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'Make His name famous'

God calls IMB missionary family to reach war ground of South Sudan amid political

Moving to South Sudan, a war ground of turmoil and strife in Northeast Africa, has been a major risk for Robert and Maridith Lane, even to the point that the International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries call in daily to assure their teammates in

Uganda that their family is still alive.

Since age 8, Maridith, a Georgia native, knew she would one day lead a life surrendered to Christ on the missions field. Robert, from Texas and Tennessee, found his calling at age 19 when he became aware of the startling amount of unreached people groups, which now number more than 6,500. By 21 he was com-

mitted to reaching the unreached with the gospel overseas.

"I thought maybe there's a chance that I can go and in some way make Christ's name accessible to the people who have not been able to hear it," Robert said.

Burdened hearts

When the Lanes visited South Sudan in 2010, their hearts became burdened for the unreached peoples of the nation. There are more than 400,000 people unreached by the gospel in South Sudan, which became independent of Sudan in 2011.

The Lanes' journey began with two years of preparation in neighboring Uganda where they lived among the Karamojong people. Gunshot echoes and cattle raids were common, but the couple also learned about other realities such as cooking from scratch with local ingredients and learning which gospel-sharing methods work best

with cattle-culture people groups.

In November 2013 they moved to South Sudan. Now they are learning to live a life more difficult than they ever experienced. They see it as a risk worth taking if it means following God in obedience to reach out to the Dinka Rek people group, numbering nearly 3 million.

"We need to be ready for those hardships, ready for those difficulties, ready to be used as a sacrifice for Christ as we try to make His name famous," Robert explained.

The Lanes, along with their teammates Selvin and Laurel Jeremiadoss, attend language

classes five days a week and immerse themselves into the culture, building relationships with tutors, neighbors and local church leaders.

The Lanes admit life is not easy in South Sudan because of the hot climate, political conflict, water scarcity and high food


prices. Raising their 2-year-old son, Shepherd, in such an environment takes a lot of prayer and

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National goal: \$175 million
Alabama's goal: \$11.6 million



A Dying Child's Spiritual Legacy
By Fred G. Womack

Retired SBC pastor, Fred G. Womack, tells of his 6-year-old daughter's battle with cancer, his personal grief and how God granted unexpected and astonishing assistance through it all, such as the child's vision of heaven before her death. The book highlights that nothing short of God's supernatural comfort could produce solace and hope powerful enough to offset the unrelenting anguish that came in those days.

Books may be ordered online from Amazon.com, Booksamillion.com or WestBowPress.com.

NEW LOOK. SAME MISSION.



The Baptist Foundation of Alabama's new logo is a modern take on the traditional Cross of Christ, symbolic of our commitment to serve our Savior and fellow Christians with our very best. The logo also signifies the protection and security of a shield, reflecting the responsibility that TBFA takes to administer gifts given for the growth of God's Kingdom. Our new tagline, "Giving. Growing. All for God's Glory", summarizes this mission well.

While our logo may have changed, our purpose remains the same. TBFA's brand is about much more than a new logo. We are blessed to play a daily role in the lives of so many churches and individuals seeking to honor God with their financial resources. Whether through investment management, fund administration, estate planning or stewardship of Big Jar assets to fuel God's ministry work, it is our privilege to serve.

To learn more about how we can help you achieve the mission the Lord may have laid upon your heart, please visit our redesigned website at tbfa.org or contact us at (334) 394-2000.

Please visit our booth at the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

The Baptist Foundation of Alabama's staff members look forward to meeting with you!

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Maridith Lane greets Karamojong women in northern Uganda. “[God] has used this transition time to prepare our hearts for what’s to come,” she said. In November 2013, the Lane family of three moved to South Sudan, the country God laid on their hearts more than five years ago.

conflict, water scarcity

a strong marriage, Robert said.

“It’s a challenge to live and work in a country where even the local people find it at times too difficult ... and move away,” Robert said.

Another challenge they face is trying to teach a warlike people group to love. The Dinka take pride in their cattle, raiding other groups to gain more and defending their own by force.

“The Dinka are very strong and proud. In tradition they’re extremely warlike,” Robert explained. “They say, ‘We hate our enemy, we hate this other people group, we hate people who try to take anything from us or keep us from political power.’”

However, the Lanes have no doubt South Sudan is where God has called them. Getting into the country is usually difficult, Robert said, but they were able to gain access, set up a house and build relationships with local people in a relatively short period of time.

“It’s not been easy by any stretch of the imagination,” Robert explained, “but in a lot of ways we’ve been able to do something that should really be impossible and I see that as a very big confirmation of God’s will to have us in South Sudan.”

As the team forms ministry plans, they recognize the best method is to bring in trainers from Uganda who can adequately equip believers in church leadership.

Bringing in the trainers will not only help the local believers in their confidence as leaders but also will strengthen their faith and their understanding of

church, Robert said. The hope is that these leaders will one day plant churches among their own people.

The Lanes are grateful for the strong support they have through their team in South Sudan and Uganda, along with Southern Baptists’ prayers and giving through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for international missions and Cooperative Program. As a team they encourage one another daily, trying to stay positive.

True love

They believe their call is to persevere through the hardships and teach the Dinka what love really looks like. At the end of the day, Robert said, there’s no price too great to pay because this sacred effort is worth it.

“It’s taken a strong dependence on Jesus Christ and understanding the truth and reality of the message,” he said. “The only reason why we do what we do is because there’s such a great, wonderful, beautiful, eternal reward, not simply for us but for the glory of God.”

To explore African people



IMB photo

groups and the need to reach them, visit subaharanafrikan-peoples.imb.org and realize that you could be who God uses to reach them. Find out how to get ready to embrace that calling at going.imb.org.

Team leader Jeremy Taliaferro felt a call to missions at a Centrifuge camp at age 14. Find out how LifeWay’s FUGE summer campers are partnering with teams in Africa, including this ministry team called Echelon, to meet needs for water, health care and local leadership training by visiting fugeforafrica.org/about/.

Visit imb.org/offering for resources to help promote the LMCO in your church, including

downloadable videos at imb.org/Imcvideo and two featuring the Lanes: vimeo.com/95770386 and vimeo.com/95768056.

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Director of the office of evangelism, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

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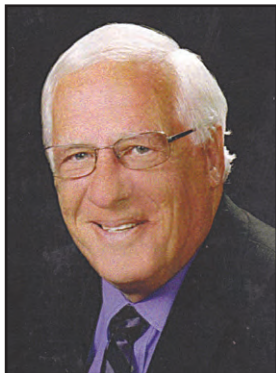
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'Seek a fresh movement of God'

SBC leaders challenge pastors-in-training

In an Oct. 30 "Prayer Summit for Spiritual Awakening" at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), three Southern Baptist leaders challenged pastors-in-training to seek a fresh movement of God and lead their congregations to experience the same.

Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, opened the prayer summit in the seminary's Leavell Chapel, preaching from Isaiah 63-64.

"In the book of Isaiah there was a situation in chapters 63 and 64 much like what we see in our culture today," Floyd said. "People are realizing 'we can't fix ourselves.'"

After the chapel hour Floyd teamed up with local pastor and former SBC president Fred Luter and the current president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Lafayette pastor Steve Horn, for a question-and-answer luncheon and time of guided prayer with NOBTS students and participants.

NOBTS President Chuck Kelley, who emceed the luncheon, asked Floyd, Luter and Horn to describe three steps or places to start in seeking to experience an awakening or new work of God in their ministry setting.

Luter answered first, focusing on the issue of faithfulness — to God, family and "the church you're serving."

Luter said when he reflects on his ministry thus far, which includes serving as pastor of one of the largest churches in Louisiana and serving two years as president of the convention, it all has hinged on faithfulness.

"I contribute it to one thing: faithfulness. I've been faithful to God, faithful to my family, faithful to my church," he said.

During a Q&A time, one member of the audience asked Luter how he is able to personally identify God's will for his life.

"Very, very easy question. I ask my wife," Luter said to roaring applause.

Horn then offered three ideas for where ministers can start in seeking a fresh work of God in their churches — "start where you are," lead by example and teach some form of evangelism strategy.

Floyd closed the Q-and-A time by challenging future pastors to prompt congregations to pray for a "mighty anointing" in church services every week; to take a month at the beginning of every year to preach on prayer, fasting, revival and awakening; and to regularly commit a full service to prayer.

"That would be unique in today's church. ... Praying doesn't happen in most churches — it really doesn't," he said.

Floyd closed the prayer summit with a guided time of prayer. People gathered in small groups to pray for a spiritual awakening in the New Orleans area, in Louisiana and in the United States. Floyd guided the crowd to verbally pray for the lost around the world by means of quoting the Great Commission passages in the book of Matthew. (BP)



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'Creative outlet'

UMobile chemistry professor's quilts in art exhibit

By Stephen Tindal
Media relations writer, University of Mobile

Science and art merge in a new exhibit at the Marilyn Foley Art Gallery on the University of Mobile (UMobile) campus. The exhibit of handcrafted quilts by UMobile professor of chemistry Gail Shelly — "From Designing to Binding" — is on display through Dec. 5.

Shelly has taught general and organic chemistry at UMobile since 2008.

But "I was a seamstress long before I became a scientist," Shelly said. Since age 10 her mother and grandmother taught her the ins and outs of needlework.

"My grandmother had taught my mother how to piece quilt tops from the fabric scraps of sewing projects," Shelly said. "She also quilted with a group who worked together to sew the top, batting and backing at the same time in a 'sandwich' using decorative designs. They taught me the technique of hand quilting."

She also became an expert at embroidery.

Unique pieces of art

In 2005 she began making her own unique quilts — from smaller table runners and wall-hung quilts to king-sized bedspreads.

"They are all unique," she said. "There's no point in making the same quilt twice."

Her quilts combine vibrant colors and diverse shapes to create a unique piece of art with each project.

"Quilters use color and color value like any other artist — to define form and create spatial illusions," she said. "I love to use both color and design to create quilts that show dimensionality and movement."

Part of the inspiration for Shelly's style comes from her experience in chemistry.

"One of the areas of chemistry that has always fascinated me is how molecules interact with light to produce colors," she said. "As a quilter, fabric is my medium — it is far less messy than mixing chemicals together, although that can be quite satisfying too."

Associate professor of art Phillip Counselman, director of the Marilyn Foley Art Gallery, said Shelly's quilts "exceed the definition of craft; they are beautiful works of art. The works are highly designed with exquisite colors.

"It is apparent that Dr. Shelly is a keen observer of nature

based on her organic designs," he added. "This exhibit is a great example of how art reveals science. The exhibit is cross-disciplinary, which makes it perfect for our campus experience."

Shelly said quilting "is my creative outlet; a means of self-expression. I have probably given away more quilts than I have

kept, and it is very rewarding to know that my creations are keeping loved ones warm or bringing color into the nursery of a newborn baby."

During the summer months, Shelly quilts with a group of women in Atmore just as her mother and grandmother did before her.



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

"Using my hands to create stitched designs allows me to honor the women in my family that worked with needle and thread and who took the time to show me how to continue a time-

honored tradition," Shelly said.

For more information about the exhibit or the Nov. 20 Artist Talk event related to the exhibit, visit umobile.edu or call Phillip Counselman at 251-442-2283.

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CAMPUS News



JUDSON COLLEGE

► Judson Theatre Program to Perform 'A Christmas Carol':

Judson College's theatre program will perform "A Christmas Carol" on Nov. 13–15 with all three performances held on campus in Alumnae Auditorium at 7 p.m.

The director of the play is Billie Jean Young; musical director is Betty Campbell; and stage designer is Jamie Adams.

In addition to the play, Judson's English Club will be hosting a traditional Dickensian Christmas Dinner at 8:30 p.m. in Archibald Hall after the Nov. 15 performance.

For more information, contact Chris Hokanson at chokanson@judson.edu or call 334-683-5124.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► UMobile to Host Christmas Spectacular:

It's already Christmas at the University of Mobile (UMobile) as more than 250 students, faculty and staff are preparing for the 12th annual UMobile

Christmas Spectacular on Nov. 20–23 at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. Doors open at 6 p.m. on Nov. 20–22 and at 3 p.m. on Nov. 23.

It's the largest Christmas concert along the Alabama, Mississippi and Florida panhandle Gulf Coast region.

Tickets can be purchased online at itickets.com or are available at the LifeWay bookstore in Mobile, Dauphin Way Baptist or by contacting the UMobile Center for Performing Arts at 251-442-2383 or svalentin@umobile.edu.

► UMobile Honors Veterans at a Veterans Day Celebration:

A Veterans Day Celebration at the University of Mobile (UMobile) on Nov. 11 honored 98-year-old World War II veteran John Stanford Davis.

The Veterans Day Celebration began at 11 a.m. in front of J.L. Bedsole Library with a RamCorps performance of the National Anthem and the Armed Forces Medley.

The university also honored veterans among the students, faculty and staff. The speaker was UMobile student and U.S.

Navy veteran Steven Goff.

UMobile is designated as "Military Friendly" and participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

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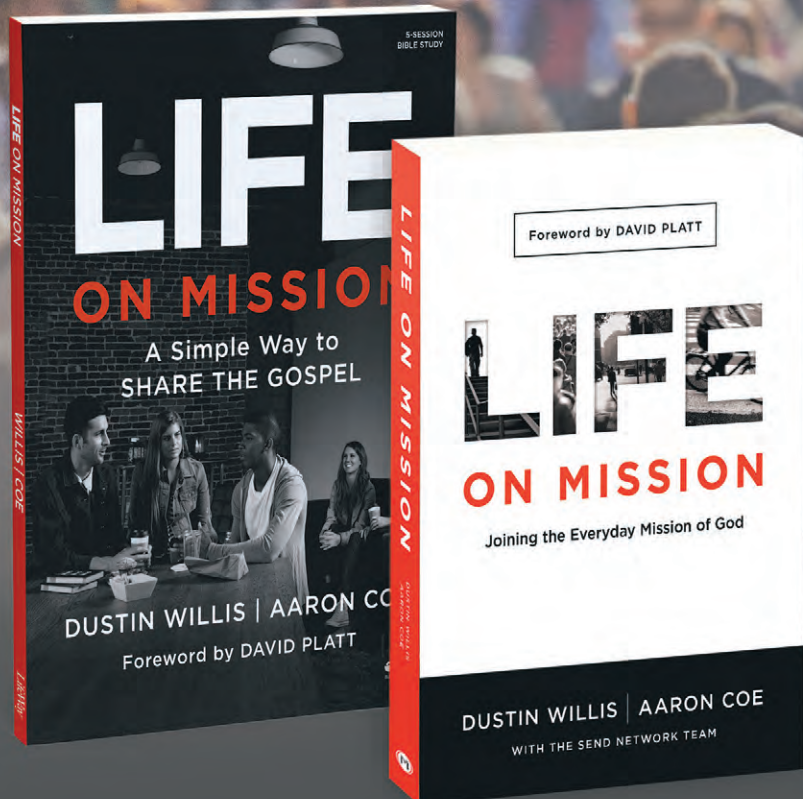
► Samford University Provides New Opportunity in Legal Journalism:

Samford University's Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) department and Samford's Cumberland School of Law have announced a unique partnership for students interested in legal journalism.

Under the partnership JMC majors can complete their undergraduate program and law degree in a total of six years (three years each).

Cumberland School of Law faculty will mentor JMC students interested in law and help with the teaching of JMC's law and ethics courses. JMC majors also will be invited to participate in Cumberland School of Law events.

For more information, visit howard.samford.edu/jmc/.



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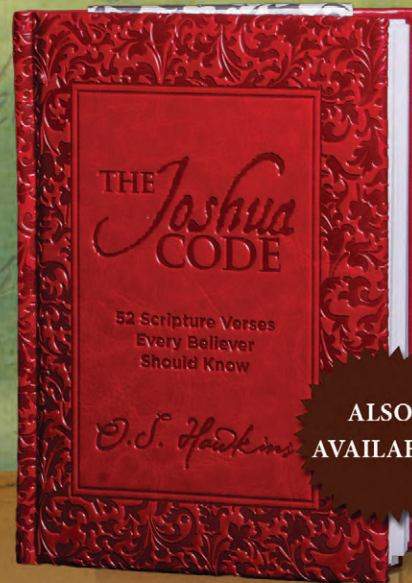
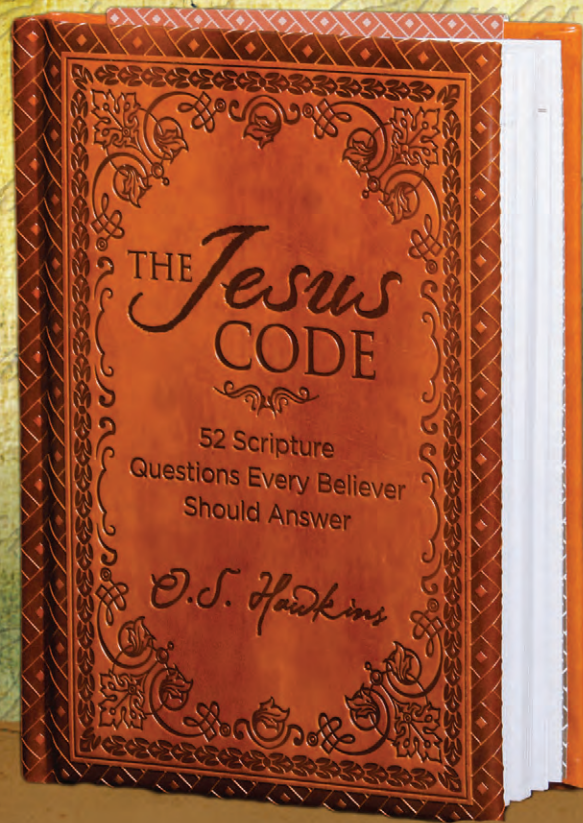
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'America's theological health'

Study shows most Americans believe in heaven, hell

Most Americans believe in heaven, hell and a few old-fashioned heresies.

Americans disagree about mixing religion and politics and about the Bible. And few pay much heed to their pastor's sermons or see themselves as sinners.

Those are among the findings of a new study of American views about Christian theology from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. The online survey of 3,000 Americans was commissioned by Orlando-based Ligonier Ministries.

Stephen Nichols, chief academic officer of Ligonier Ministries, said the study was intended to "take the temperature of America's theological health."

Researchers asked 43 questions about faith, covering topics from sin and salvation to the Bible and the afterlife.

Many Americans get the basics right, but they're often fuzzy on the details, said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research.

"People like to believe in a generic Christian-ish god with

cafeteria doctrines," Stetzer said. "However, when we asked about harder beliefs — things that the Church has and still considers orthodox — the numbers shift."

Among the study's findings:

Americans say heaven is a real place. But they disagree about who gets in.

Two thirds (67 percent) of Americans believe heaven is a real place. That includes, following standard demographic categories, 9 in 10 Black Protestants (88 percent) and evangelicals (90 percent), three quarters of Catholics (75 percent) as well as a third of non-Christians (37 percent).

Conflicting views

Just under half of Americans (45 percent) say there are many ways to heaven — which conflicts with traditional views about salvation being linked to faith in Jesus.

About half of Americans (53 percent) say salvation is in Christ alone. Four in 10 (41 percent) say people who have never heard of Jesus can still get into heaven. And 3 in 10 (30 percent) say people will have a chance to follow God after they die.

About 6 in 10 Americans (61

percent) say hell is a real place. Black Protestants (86 percent) and evangelicals (87 percent) are most likely to say hell is real. Catholics (66 percent) and mainline Protestants (55 percent) are less convinced.

Overall, Americans don't seem too worried about sin or being sent to hell. Two-thirds (67 percent) say most people are basically good, even though everyone sins a little bit — an optimistic view of human nature at odds with traditional teaching about human sin.

When it comes to faith, Americans like a do-it-yourself approach.

Most Americans (71 percent), and in particular Black Protestants (82 percent) and Catholics (87 percent), say people must contribute some effort toward their own salvation.

Many Americans also don't mind being disconnected from a local church. About half (52 percent) say worshipping alone or with family is as good as going to church.

About 7 in 10 (71 percent) Americans believe in the Trinity.

But few — even those in evangelical denominations — seem to grasp the details of how Christians have historically taught the Trinity. More than half of evangelicals (59 percent), for example, say the Holy Spirit is a force — not a personal being. Ten percent are not sure, while 31 percent agree the Spirit is a person. Overall, two-thirds of Americans (64 percent) say the Holy Spirit is a force.

'Theological awareness'

More than 1 in 7 Americans (15 percent) say the Holy Spirit is less divine than God the Father and Jesus. A third (33 percent) believe God the Father is more divine than Jesus. About 1 in 5 (19 percent) say Jesus was the first creature made by God. All of those run counter to Christian doctrine as found in historic creeds of the Church.

About half of Americans (48 percent) believe the Bible is the Word of God. Four in 10 (43 percent) say the Bible is 100 percent accurate, while a similar share of Americans (41 percent) say it's helpful but not literally true.

Nichols said, "This study demonstrates the stunning gap in theological awareness throughout our nation, in our neighborhoods and even in the seat next to us at church." (LifeWay Research)



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Tuscaloosa Association's Boykin says there is 'hope for churches in transitioning communities'

(continued from page 1)
prayer meetings and seeking the Lord, Graceway members, Davis and the dozen Fleetwood members felt "God had brought two groups together to form one body."

Graceway dissolved as a church and Grace Connection Church (GCC) was constituted in August. An official launch celebration was held Oct. 12 with 148 participants and GCC was voted into Tuscaloosa Association at its annual meeting Oct. 21.

GCC asked Forest Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, to be its sponsoring church, something the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions encourages for all new church plants.

'God's doing'

Osborn, now a GCC elder, trustee and assistant treasurer, initially was hesitant of all the change but eventually saw it all as "God's doing."

Now with 80-90 gathering each Sunday, GCC's vision is to have a spiritual leader over each of the multihousing communities in the

area (six apartment complexes and one trailer park). The members hope to set up Bible studies and ministries to reach each community and to launch the outreach in January with two ideas already in place: a Bible study/exercise group in an apartment complex where they have already been given access to the workout facilities and a Bible study for single mothers in a complex where 80 percent of the residents are mothers and their children.

GCC currently is active in one other multihousing community in the area and members are forming relationships with the managers.

"Doors are just opening more and more," Davis said.

Because of the relationships formed, the largest apartment complex in the area gave GCC the apartment numbers of all the new move-ins for September. Funded by the association, church members made welcome baskets with information about the church and useful household items like a pizza cutter or a Frisbee for children. The complex's

management allowed Davis to hand-deliver the baskets, enabling him to meet the new residents.

Boykin will continue to meet and train GCC members as they strive to reach the multihousing communities around the church.

"There is hope for churches in transitioning communities; God has a plan," Boykin said.

"GCC happened because a small group of people decided to change, to unify behind a new strategy, to get out of the building and reach out to people who were different from them," he said. "I'm convinced that this is the hope of hundreds of inner-city churches that are dying because they have

failed to adapt, change and re-emerge as a force in their community. The opportunity to replicate (what GCC did) is enormous."

And Davis said he hopes to lead the church with a "vision centered around connection."

"Our desire is to help connect people to Christ, connect to each other and connect to their purpose, or calling in ministry," Davis said. "Our ultimate goal is to reach someone in these complexes with Christ and connect them to other believers in a study and eventually have them take over the study (in their community). ... We're not looking to grow a church, we're looking to grow the Kingdom." ❏

For more information on multihousing ministries, contact Eric Boykin at 205-765-9154.

Observe Week of Prayer for international missions

National Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) will host an area-wide observance of the Week of Prayer for international missions Dec. 4, 10-11 a.m., with a reception to follow. Everyone is invited to enjoy a time of prayer and fellowship.

The WMU gift shop also will be open, featuring items from WorldCrafts, books and Bible studies from New Hope Publishers and much more.

Debby Akerman, national WMU president, will be the featured speaker.

Wanda S. Lee, executive director of national WMU, said, "During this season, we hope your church will also conduct an annual Week of Prayer for international missions observance and we thank you for your sacrificial gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to directly support missionaries serving with the International Mission Board."

Visit www.wmu.com/praysvp by Dec. 1 to register for the event or call 205-991-8100. (WMU)



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PASTOR: Rainsville First Baptist is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 585, Rainsville, AL 35986, email: firstbaptist@farmerstel.com.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION & FAMILY: North Shelby Baptist Church, on Hwy. 280, suburban Birmingham, is accepting resumés for this full-time position. North Shelby is a traditional Southern Baptist church, 21 years old, beautiful facilities, ready to grow. Details about the position are at www.northshelbybaptist.org.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: East Side Baptist Church in Cullman, Ala., is receiving resumés until Dec. 1 for a part-time worship leader. Email resumés to: kenallen2@bellsouth.net.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Community Baptist Church, Maylene, Ala. (Alabaster area), is seeking a bivocational music minister. Resumés to: cbcsearchcommittee@gmail.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.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Springfield Baptist Church, 30 miles north of Nashville, is seeking a full-time children's minister. Requirements include a Southern Baptist background, a seminary degree (preferred) and two years of children's ministry experience. This position will include programming and coordinating of all children's activities on Sundays and Wednesdays for ages birth through 6th grade. Please send resumés to: bethbohler05@gmail.com by Nov. 24.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: The Winston Baptist Association in NW 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,

P.O. Box 246, Double Springs, AL 35553.

PART-TIME PIANIST: East Side Baptist Church in Cullman, Ala., is receiving resumés until Dec. 1 for a part-time pianist. Email resumés to: kenallen2@bellsouth.net.

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Want to know GOD?

Pastor Charles Freeman
Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville

In Philippians 3:10 the apostle Paul revealed the true desire of his heart. His heart was to know Christ. He stated it this way, "I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead. I want to suffer with Him, sharing in His death." You see, Paul already knew Christ; Paul had met Christ on the road to Damascus as he was on his way to stamp out the early Christian movement. However, he now wanted to experience Christ in a deeper way. He wanted to experience the power that raised Christ from the dead and also suffer with Christ in order to know Him at a different level. This was Paul's desire because his encounter with Christ changed him totally and completely. Wouldn't you want to know more about the person who did something like that for you?

People are looking for a difference maker in their lives. Jesus is the only true difference maker that I know. I had known about Jesus for many years before I was saved as a nine year old at Glenn Memorial Baptist Church, Bessemer. I have discovered through the years that it is one thing to know about Christ and another thing to truly know Him as our Lord and Savior. To truly know Jesus means to have a personal relationship with Him. To know Jesus is more than just walking an aisle and joining a church. To truly know Jesus results in a radically changed life.

Do you have that kind of relationship with Jesus at this very moment? Have you experienced the mighty power that raised Him from the dead? Have you suffered in any way because of your faith? The challenge that Paul leaves to us in our generation is that we should not only want to know Him, but we should really want to "know" Him, to know more about Him so that we can become more like Him every day. Why not make a commitment to Him today to not only know Him but to get to know Him better? I pray this will be the desire of your heart starting today. ❏

Alabama communities vote no on 'big alcohol'

The dry votes prevailed in three Alabama communities Nov. 4 as voters won the fight against the continued expansion of alcohol sales.

In Hartselle, the largest dry city in the state, citizens voted for the fourth time in 12 years to keep the area free from alcohol sales with 231 more dry votes than wet.

Walter Blackman, pastor of East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, served as co-chairman of A Better Way political action agency and the campaign U Prayed.

Hartselle has been successful in keeping the area free of alcohol sales for years, Blackman said, because the fight has not been "against alcohol but against alcohol sales."

"We have had a broad spectrum of people help keep Hartselle dry. ... We've asked people to pray about their vote and about their decision and about those affected by it. But we've also not isolated the issue to only a church thing or a Christian war against alcohol," Blackman said, noting that several dry voters drink alcohol themselves but they don't approve of the sale of alcohol in the area.

Wet supporters often say people will stop moving to Hartselle if they vote dry but the opposite is

true, according to Blackman.

"People come to Hartselle because we're dry and want to move their families here and the crime is among the lowest in the state."

In Rainsville the dry's prevailed as the "no" votes tallied 770 compared to 741 in favor of legalizing sales.

And Locust Fork saw the "no" votes win by 221 to 122 to remain a dry area.

'Costs to society'

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), said alcohol proponents fail to discuss the "costs to society that are associated with increased alcohol sales."

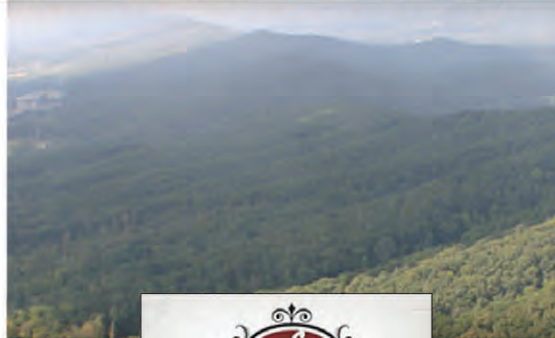
"'Wet forces' never mention that for every \$1 of revenue that comes into the community, it costs \$15-18 to clean up the devastation that results from an increase in domestic violence cases, drunk driving and other accidents. Alcohol does not solve problems; it creates problems for cities and communities."

"ALCAP rejoices with Rainsville, Hartselle and Locust Fork communities as they voted to keep 'big alcohol' out of their communities," Godfrey said. (Neisha Fuson)



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 16

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

THE DISCIPLINE OF SUFFERING Hebrews 12:1-7

Hebrews 12 was written to strengthen our faith so we can follow the faithful witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11 by considering Jesus' example. We gain strength to face trials by considering Jesus' endurance of hardship as well as the divine purpose of discipline.

The Christian life is hard and for many of you, this is where you are right now. These verses are in the Bible to help you.

Enduring (1-3)

In verse 1 Christians find encouragement in being surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. These witnesses in Hebrews 11 risked it all on God and His promises. Some of them, through faith, saw God do incredibly powerful things. Others died without receiving any earthly validation for their faith. They had prayed the same prayers but God did not rescue them from their trial (Heb. 11:32-40). These witnesses are witnesses by the fact their past lives bear witness to monumental, persevering faith that, like Abel's faith, "still speaks, even though he is dead" (Heb. 11:4).

Such encouragement should lead us to lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely to us. We should throw off everything that hinders our spiritual development. A hindrance is something, otherwise good, that weighs us down spiritually. It could be a friendship, an event, a place, a habit, a pleasure, an entertainment. But if this otherwise good thing drags you down you must lay it aside. A sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude or nature. If we are to finish well in faith, we must strip our souls naked of everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us.

God's desire is for us to run the race set before us with endurance. We each have a specific course mapped out for us and the course for each runner is unique. This race is not a sprint; it's a marathon. With the

empowerment of the Holy Spirit we can run with endurance and finish well (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

In verses 2-3 we see that we must keep our eyes focused on Jesus. His steadfast obedience provided a perfect example of commitment for struggling believers. Jesus is the founder of our faith. He initiates our faith and enables us to believe (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus also is the perfecter of our faith. He takes struggling believers, develops our faith and enables us to persevere in the faith.

Jesus endured the suffering of the cross by focusing on the victorious joy and the future reward that would be His when He returned to the Father. Many of the readers could identify with the hostility shown to Jesus, though on a lesser scale. As Jesus endured by trusting in the promise of God, so we should keep on keeping on as we anticipate the Father's promise of future blessing.

Disciplined (4-7)

Verse 4 puts the struggles of the readers of Hebrews in perspective. Although they had experienced intense hardship, they had not yet faced resistance to the point of shedding their blood. Their main test was fighting their own sinful nature.

By quoting Proverbs 3:11-12 in verses 5-6, the writer urges us not to belittle God's discipline and not to lose heart in the face of God's rebuke. We should not see trials as cause for discouragement but as a sign of God's determined love. We need to reflect on the long-term benefits of our trials and recognize that discipline represents God's method of developing our maturity.

Verse 7 teaches discipline is God's loving method for shaping our character. Discipline was a common term for childrearing through instruction, training and correction. However, the book of Hebrews focuses on the call for perseverance in the painful tests of life. These tests are to our benefit, prove our sonship and require a response of perseverance. We, therefore, should not be disheartened when we face hardship. 🙏

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

OVERCOME BITTERNESS Genesis 45:3-11

Forgiveness does not mean we forget the past. (3-4)

Judah's speech on behalf of Benjamin is so moving that Joseph can no longer control his emotions. Standing alone with his brothers, Joseph reveals his identity. In view of Judah's speech Joseph asks if their father is really still alive. ("Life" could refer simply to good health.)

Some interpreters identify this part of the story as a "gospel disclosure": the dead one is alive. The abandoned one has returned in power. In the case of Joseph's family, they now have to live with the reality of a live, powerful, ruling Joseph. Taking this "gospel disclosure" motif a step further, the terror and astonishment of the brothers is not unlike that of the early church with the discovery of the live Jesus (Mark 16:8). The family's world has been irreversibly changed just as the entire world is changed with the reality of the resurrection.

Joseph asks his brothers to come closer not to see him more closely but to cross a barrier from distance and injustice to reunion and forgiveness. He identifies himself further by recalling their shared story and going directly to the heart of the issue: You sold me into Egypt.

Forgiveness focuses on the future. (5-8)

Joseph's next comment proves decisive. He senses his brothers are frightened, distressed and angry with each other. They are wondering what this shocking news means for their future. Joseph does not scold them or blame them. Rather he allays their fears by making a bold faith proclamation. Joseph assures the brothers that in spite of their past history all will be well because what has happened has been used by God for His purposes. Joseph invites the brothers (and invites us) to view the past from the perspective of the present. The difficult past can be interpreted as having a positive dimension. The Sovereign God has "taken

over" what they have done and used it to bring about this good end. Their actions have become God's by being woven into His life-giving, reconciling purposes. What is more, even Pharaoh's actions — including elevating Joseph as prime minister — have become God's.

There is a wonderful salvific theme here. Joseph has helped a remnant of "lost" and hungry people to be saved from years of famine. One hears echoes of Christ's story that comes later. Like Joseph, Jesus came to a foreign country and He was abused by His "brothers." Like Joseph, Jesus was stripped of His coat. But instead of being thrown into a pit and then sold into slavery, Jesus was thrown on the ground and nailed to a cross. Yet like Joseph's story what was meant for evil against Jesus, God turned around for good. God took that cross and by it sins were forgiven and lives were saved. And lives are still being saved.

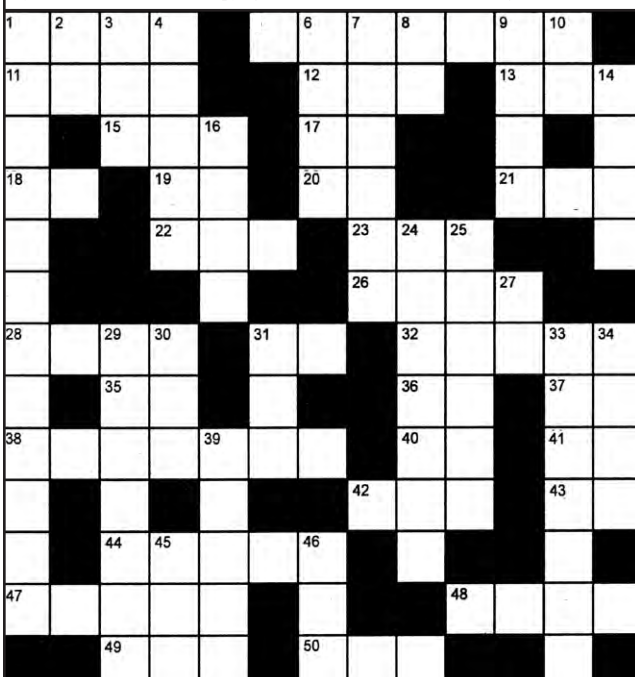
Forgiveness seeks good for the forgiven. (9-11)

Joseph now seeks to preserve and protect his family in a way that reflects God's gracious providence. Joseph acts as father, lord and ruler (all used as images for God in the Old Testament). Joseph tells his brothers to hurry home, report these events to their father, return with family and possessions and settle in the land of Goshen near him. The land of Goshen was a fertile area of Egypt where Jacob's family and their descendants could live close to one another without fear. Joseph assures them that he will provide for all their needs — adults, children and animals — during the continuing famine.

As followers of Christ we are aliens in a foreign world. Nevertheless our Father, Lord and Ruler sees to our own needs as we pass through this land. All the more by His own suffering we have been restored as part of His family. As such we can live our days without fear and we can tell others the good news of the God who works all things for good. 🙏

Christian Crossword

By Susan F. Weimer Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- I would thou wert ___ or hot. (Rev. 3:15)
- ___ my voice. (Ex. 19:5)
- ___ thou at my right hand. (Ps. 110:1)
- Behold, ___ is the accepted time. (2 Cor. 6:2)
- To make a hole.
- Audiovisual. (abbr.)
- District Attorney. (abbr.)
- There is none righteous, ___ not one. (Rom. 3:10)
- Not A, E or O.
- A sharp, shrill bark or yelp.
- In the beginning ___. (Gen. 1:1)
- He hath put a ___ song in my mouth. (Ps. 40:3)
- Rejoice, and be exceeding ___. (Matt. 5:12)
- The mountain of ___. (Deut. 34:1)
- The ratio of the circumference of a

Down

- There is therefore no ___ (Rom. 8:1)
- Obstetrician. (abbr.)
- For as many as are ___ by the Spirit. (Rom. 8:14)
- As ___, and behold we live. (2 Cor. 6:9)
- ___ said to Jacob, "Feed me." (Gen. 25:30)
- Lead them unto ___ fountains of waters. (Rev. 7:17)
- And ___ repented the Lord that He had made man. (Gen. 6:6)
- ___ thou not the oppressor. (Prov. 3:31)
- Roseanna's nickname.
- Jesus ___. (John 11:35)
- None is ___, save one. (Luke 18:19)
- Adah bore to Esau ___. (Gen. 36:4)
- Have ___ their robes. (Rev. 7:14)
- Doctor of Arts. (abbr.)
- Unto all and upon all them that ___. (Rom. 3:22)
- That they all may be ___. (John 17:21)
- Whom Sarah bore to him, ___. (Gen. 21:3)
- Prefix meaning "in."
- Purple Heart. (abbr.)
- Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
- Unto one he gave five ___. (Matt. 25:15)
- ___ that hath an ear. (Rev. 2:7)
- Alabama. (abbr.)
- Not happy.
- Football defensive lineman. (abbr.)
- They were not afraid of the king's ___. (Heb. 11:23)
- Belly button.
- The ___ of all evil. (1 Tim. 6:10)
- Emergency Medical Service. (abbr.)
- The ___ of joy for mourning. (Isa. 61:3)
- Delivered it from the ___ of corruption. (Isa. 38:17)
- Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is ___ (Rev. 9:11)
- I will ___ on the name of the Lord. (1 Kings 18:24)
- In His hands the print of the ___. (John 20:25)
- Democrat. (abbr.)
- How thee ___ tables of stone. (Deut. 10:1)





Media reviews

BOOKS

By Martine Sharp, *The Alabama Baptist*

Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive

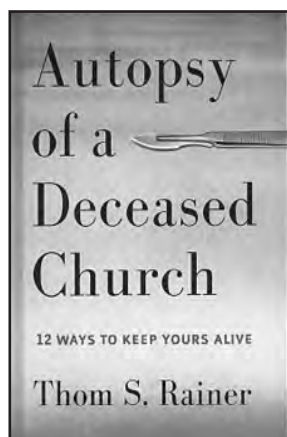
Thom S. Rainer. Nashville. B&H Publishing, 2014. 102 pp. (Hardback).

We all know of churches that have dwindled in membership until they finally closed their doors and we know of those that are now on the verge of dying. How sad to see a once-thriving church gasping for breath as it heads for extinction.

Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, wrote "Autopsy of a Deceased Church" from what he has learned in 25 years of working with churches that were on a downward trajectory. Rainer first details the signs of decline in churches, citing things like refusing to look like the community, living on past glories and having no clear purpose. Obvious, right? Not always, apparently. Not to those who are entrenched in a dying church.

So what can be done to stop the decline? Rainer is not overly optimistic, pointing out that most churches that are well into a state of decline never recover. He offers a dozen actions to take depending on how sick a church is.

The frightening estimate that as many as 150,000 churches in this county are in danger should be enough to send church staff and church members scrambling for a solution. Rainer offers solutions but acknowledges the attitudes and actions that allowed the decline to begin in the first place are likely to keep needed changes from taking place.



A Woman Seeking God: Discover God in the Places of Your Life

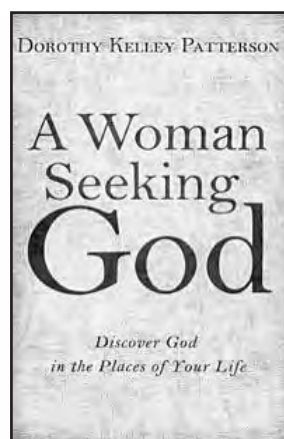
Dorothy Kelley Patterson. Nashville. B&H Publishing, 2013. 213 pp. (Paperback).

Dorothy Kelley Patterson, professor of theology for women's studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and wife of seminary president Paige Patterson, has written several books aimed at helping women in their Christian growth. The last one I reviewed, "A Christian Homemaker's Handbook," was basically a how-to. This one seems to be more of a "why-to."

When you see Dorothy Patterson's name on a book, you probably have an idea what to expect — something articulately and intelligently written, heavily reliant on Scripture and uber conservative in approach. That describes this devotional book well.

Many women struggle with the issue of biblical womanhood, sometimes chafing at the restrictions put on our gender. Dorothy Patterson would not call them restrictions at all. She is clearly comfortable in her role, describing herself as an 'old-fashioned evangelical' with master's and doctor's degrees and advocating a theological education for women.

The book is not a diatribe and it is not argumentative. Instead Patterson simply uses the Scriptures and her personal experiences to encourage, instruct and guide women in their "personal life, in the home, in celebra-



tions and in service to God and country" — the places of their lives.

Big Doors Swing on Small Hinges: A Little Word Can Make a Big Difference

Roger D. Mardis. Bloomington, Ind. WestBow Press, 2014. 161 pp. (Paperback).

Ever notice how often the Bible uses the word "but"? According to author Roger D. Mardis, pastor of Agape Baptist Church, Scottsboro, the little conjunction is the hinge that many passages in the Bible turn on, indicating a change — like Solomon, who ceased to follow the Lord — or a contrast — like Noah, who was the only one among the people on earth at that time who found favor with God.

The book is divided into 31 short chapters intended for use as daily readings. Each chapter introduces a situation and explains the "but," then the author turns around and faces the reader, asking convicting questions and pointing out issues in our own lives that need to be addressed. Entertaining and engaging as well as convicting, the book is beautifully illustrated by Carol Caudle with drawings of famous doors from Washington to Florence, Italy.

After I read this book I did a search through the Bible on my iPad for the "buts" and scrolled and scrolled, finally giving up without counting them all. Mardis only used 31 of them to include in his book. Maybe there will be a sequel. I hope so. 🙏



MUSIC

PHILLIPS, CRAIG AND DEAN

Above It All

Fair Trade Services

Fourteen albums over two decades, including one of only seven RIAA certified gold singles in Christian music history, 23 No. 1 singles, three Gospel Music Association Dove Awards, 3 million units sold — all the while serving as full-time pastors — trio Phillips, Craig and Dean have to be in the lead for the overachiever's award in Christian music. Their new project, "Above It All," may not produce another mega-hit like "Revelation Song," but it certainly



stands as another impressive effort in their 23-year career.

One of the record's best is the upbeat "If Not for Grace," co-written by Dean, his son, Devin, and Jennie Lee Riddle, who wrote "Revelation Song." "High Above It All" is another outstanding song and the inspiration for the record's title. There's not a bad song in the bunch, which says a lot after 14 records.

Many longtime fans will buy this latest CD just to continue their collection of PC&D records without a gap. While I agree with that logic the moving, faith-based message of this new effort is a much better reason to get the album, which released Nov. 10.

Let's hope there's at least another twenty years in these guys.

LAUREN DAIGLE

How Can It Be

Centricity Music

Lauren Daigle's Centricity Music debut, released Sept. 16, has been making a lot of noise in Christian radio with both a top 20 hit and by garnering iTunes' No. 4 spot. "How Can It Be" is a perfect example of the instant success that sometimes follows a dizzying amount of work and preparation.

After a debilitating virus caused a two-year absence from high school, Daigle fought back. She completed a year and a half of classwork in six months of charter



By Rick Sharp, *The Alabama Baptist*

school, spent a year in Brazil doing missions work, pursued a degree at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, led worship at her church and made a run at American Idol, all while honing her songwriting and performance skills. It's a little wonder that Centricity Music noticed her and produced her Christmas anthem, "Light of the World" that led to her debut project on their label.

I can best describe the music as "weighty," buoyed by Daigle's strong and earthy vocal style.

Good writing, top notch production and Daigle's enormous talent combine to create one of the most impressive debut projects I've heard in a long time. 🙏

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

Extreme violence

Islamist mob kills Christian couple accused of 'blasphemy'

Commanded from mosque loud-speakers, a Muslim throng in Punjab Province of Pakistan killed a Christian couple Nov. 4 after a co-worker accused the pregnant wife of defiling the Quran, sources said.

Living on the premises of the brick kiln where she worked in Chak 59 village near Kot Radha Kishan, Karur District, about 37 miles southwest of Lahore, Shama Bibi was beaten to death before the enraged mob threw her body into the kiln, a relative said. The 28-year-old mother of four was five months pregnant.

A relative said her husband, Shahzad Masih, also was beaten but was still alive when he was thrown into the kiln with his wife's body. He was 32.

On Nov. 2, Shama was cleaning her quarters when she found amulets of her late father-in-law, who had used them to practice black magic.

"Shama burned the amulets and some other related material, assuming this was the best way to get rid of 'evil stuff,'" the relative said. "She later threw the ashes on a garbage heap outside their quarters when Muhammad Irfan, a Muslim co-worker, noticed some half-burnt pieces of paper from the amulets and raised a clamor, claiming that Shahzad's family had desecrated Quranic pages."

On Nov. 3, announcements emanated from village mosques calling on "all faithful" to take notice of the alleged blasphemy committed by Shama.

The announcements panicked the five Christian brothers of Masih — who also worked at the kiln — and their families, but Chaudhry Yousaf Gujjar, the kiln's Muslim owner, assured them he would handle the situation.

Mob attack

"At around 7 a.m. on Nov. 4, a mob of about 3,000–4,000 people, most of whom were armed with batons and sharp-edged weapons, started gathering around the brick kiln," the relative said, based on information from another relative who witnessed the entire crime. "The kiln's manager, Muhammad Akram, asked the couple to hide in a room next to the office and told them to lock the door from the inside while he put a padlock on the outside. Sensing the imminent danger to their lives, Shahzad's brothers and all male children fled the kiln, leaving behind the women and little children in the quarters thinking the mob, which was baying for the blood of Shahzad and his wife, would not hurt them."

The mob forced their way into the quarters and started searching for the couple. Unable to locate them, the crowd rushed toward the office and demanded that the manager reveal their whereabouts.

"We are not sure if Akram gave away the couple, but according to [the other relative], the mob broke into the room and then dragged both of them out to the courtyard," the relative said. "The mob then mercilessly beat up Shama and Shahzad, using fists, kicks and batons at will. [The other relative] said Shama was already dead by the time

the Islamist zealots had thrown her body into the kiln. Shahzad was still alive when he was shoved into the fire."

The couple is survived by two boys and two girls, the eldest son being 7 years old.

Soon after news broke in local media, large police contingents were deployed in the area to prevent further bloodshed.

Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif formed a three-member committee to expedite the investigation of the killings and ordered police to beef up security in Christian neighborhoods in the province.

Kasur District police officer Capt. Jawad Qamar said a case had been registered against at least 2,000 "unidentified people" for the murders and investigations were continuing. He also said that police had arrested 48 people.

The police official's claims could not be independently verified despite repeated efforts.

Police filed a First Information Report (FIR) on its own accord, even though the aggrieved family was determined to file a formal complaint into the killings of their loved ones. Sources in the Punjab Inspector General of Police office said the government did not want the family to become the complainant in the case as it would keep media focused on developments and cause "global embarrassment" to the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, whose three terms in office have been tainted with extreme violence against non-Muslims, particularly Christians.

The relative of the deceased and Christian rights advocates criticized the police's registration of the FIR and the hasty manner in which the remains were buried without informing the family, allegedly on the counsel of a politician.

"We weren't even told about the funerals. How can a politician approve the funeral of my [relative] without even seeking my permission?" the source said, adding that the family had decided to challenge the government's decision to register a case on its own. (MSN)



MSN photo

Pakistani Christian Shahzad Masih (right) and his pregnant wife, Shama Bibi, were killed by an Islamist mob Nov. 4.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Sudanese human rights defender without a home

GENEINA, Sudan — A Sudanese father of two who once worked as a human rights defender now lives in a refugee camp after surviving an attempt to end his life by Islamic extremists.

Before Ibrahim Ismaeil Ibrahim, 34, left Islam and dared to criticize the religion he worked as a writer and human rights defender in Darfur Region's state of West Darfur for the Sudan Contemporary Center for Studies and Development. As he chronicled human rights violations by Islamic extremists, he became disillusioned with the religion and put his faith in Jesus Christ, he said.

At his home in the West Darfur capital of Geneina in January 2013, Ibrahim, his wife and two young children were unhurt in the late-night attack by what he believes was one of the Islamic extremists threatening him.

His employer contacted Front Line Defenders, an organization dedicated to assisting human rights defenders, especially those in danger. The group provided him funds for an airline ticket to Cairo, Egypt, from Khartoum, Sudan, and accommodation for three months, he said.

He rejoined his wife, 7-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter in Chad. Eventually the reunited family traveled to another country in Africa, undisclosed for security reasons, where they live as refugees at a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees camp.

Bans on Christian activity in India escalate into violence

CHHATTISGARH, India — Recent attacks on Christians in India's Chhattisgarh state Oct. 25 and earlier in the month have raised suspicion that local officials are collaborating with Hindu extremists, church leaders said.

Local officials summoned area Christians to an Oct. 25 meeting in Madota village, Bastar District, on the pretext of resolving conflict over bans in the district on missionaries and non-Hindu religious activity. Dozens of villages in the district passed such bans earlier in 2014.

Christians in Madota village gathered at the designated spot all day, but nobody turned up, church leaders said. Armed Hindu extremists wearing saffron bands arrived in the evening, accused the Christians of converting Hindus and beat more than 15 of them. Twelve were taken to hospitals for treatment, including seven who were seriously injured, church leaders said.

Arun Pannalal, president of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum, said, "The district authorities, along with some right-wing elements, are also pressuring us to withdraw the petition filed in the high court against the ban on the entry of non-Hindu missionaries in Bastar. Now our writ is pending in the high court. We see this latest attack as a pressure tactic." ☞

Pray for Pakistan

As Christians in Pakistan continue to face harsh persecution and even death because of their faith, an Open Doors representative living in Pakistan submitted the following prayer requests:

► "Raise up prayer for Pakistan at this time, particularly the Church in Pakistan, still dazed in some ways from the shock and pain of what happened with Shama Bibi and Shahzad Masih, the couple beaten and burnt on allegations of desecrating the Quran (see story this page)."

► "Pray for Aasiya Bibi who is more at risk at this

time. There is grave concern over the impact of this incident on her safety in her prison cell. Aasiya Bibi was imprisoned in 2009 after being accused of blaspheming the Islamic prophet Muhammad."

► "Pray for Shama and Shahzad's family members who we are working with and providing pastoral care to as they are raw with pain at this time."

For more information about Open Doors, a group that raises awareness about the persecuted church, visit www.opendoors.org. (TAB, Open-Doors)