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Church planters inspired, encouraged at network dinner

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The solitary moments

Donald, a widower for the past five years, sits in his recliner. A football game is on television but he's not really paying attention. Instead his thoughts are on the holidays. Thanksgiving was nice. His children and grandchildren were home and the house was full of food and laughter. Christmas will be the same and he looks forward to seeing everyone again. As wonderful as those times are his daily life is very different. Not bad. Not even sad. Just quieter. More solitary. Lonely. He wonders if others feel the same sometimes. Mostly he wonders if this is how he will feel from now on.



Dealing with Loneliness

Persistent loneliness 'red flag' to well-being

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Loneliness is a difficult feeling to understand. Though it often happens when a person is isolated from others in some way, one also can be lonely in the midst of a crowd. The feelings may develop gradually or suddenly overwhelm. Some people never feel lonely while others live with a persistent feeling of being an outsider.

"Loneliness varies from person to person in terms of severity," said Richard Yoakum, director of counseling services at Samford University in Birmingham. "The response to those feelings really depends on the person

and the support or lack of support the person has at the time."

Loneliness is not the same as being alone, however, according to Charles Hobson, a chaplain and counselor for Crossbridge Behavioral Health, an affiliate of Baptist Medical Center South, Montgomery. Periods of solitude can be energizing and refreshing. In contrast loneliness negatively affects a person's emotional, physical and social health.

Cause of other issues

Though everyone feels lonely at times, loneliness that persists can lead to more serious issues including clinical depression, dementia and a decreased life expectancy, Hobson said.

In fact loneliness is a feeling of emotional or social disconnection with symptoms not unlike those of depression, according to Steven L. Edwards, author of "Griefwise: Taking Good Care of Yourself" (Xlibris, 2012). He writes that symptoms of loneliness can include:

- ▶ Difficulty facing life's challenges.
- ▶ Constant fatigue or lethargy.
- ▶ Low self-esteem.
- ▶ Feeling as if there is no one to turn to.

- ▶ Feeling isolated in a crowd of people.
- ▶ Loss of appetite and weight.
- ▶ Uncontrollable gain in weight.

"Persistent loneliness is a red flag," Edwards writes. "It can bring on feelings of unworthiness, anxiety and fear. ... Loneliness also pre-occupies the mind making it (See 'Acknowledge,' page 4)



Photos by 123rf.com; main image edited by Lauren C. Grimm



"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever." — 1 Chronicles 16:34

COMMENT

Giving Thanks at Thanksgiving

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. For His love endures forever.”

That was the reaction of the writer of Psalm 118 after experiencing deliverance from powerful foes who threatened to end both his life and the life of the nation of Israel.

Through the ages Christians have echoed that reaction in appreciation for God’s guidance and rescue in times of trouble. The first permanent settlers in Jamestown, Va., proclaimed a public Thanksgiving in 1610 to commemorate their survival in a new land. Nine years later another group of English settlers wrote into the charter for the Berkeley Hundred community of Virginia that Dec. 4, the day of their arrival in America, would annually be observed as a day of Thanksgiving to God for their safe journey.

“I will give thanks for You answered me, You have become my salvation,” wrote the Psalmist (v. 21). That sentiment is a common thread in days of thanksgiving up to this very day.

Interestingly Thanksgiving has not been a church-sponsored holiday. Rather it has been the response of a grateful people through their civil government to acknowledge dependence on God and express praise to Him for His watch care.

Thanksgiving Day declaration

In 1789 President George Washington declared the first Thanksgiving Day designated by the new national government. He wrote in part, “Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits and humbly implore His protection and favor ... I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th of November next to be devoted by the people of these states to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be.”

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln wrote in his 1863 Thanksgiving declaration, “To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

... No human counsel hath devised nor that any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”

How like the Psalmist who wrote in verses 13–14, “I was pushed back and about to fall but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.”

Pollsters report a growing percentage of Americans who no longer believe in God, yet they will be hard to find this Thanksgiving Day. As families gather for their traditional thanksgiving meal practically all will express thanks in some way.

To whom will that thanks be expressed? Will it be to chance or blind luck? Why be thankful to chance? No even the drive to express thanks demonstrates the need of the human heart to reach beyond itself to the “beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is or that will be.”

Christians understand “it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man” (v. 8). That is why Thanksgiving is not expressed toward prince or potentate or president. Thanksgiving is focused toward God. He is the One who answers amid our anguish (v. 5). He is the One who becomes Helper (v. 7), the One to whom we look for triumph over our circumstances.

Like Washington and Lincoln the Psalmist declares, “The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things” (v. 15). That is our confession too.

God’s goodness evidences His love for us, declares the Psalmist. That love is not limited to a single person or a particular nation but is for all “those that fear the Lord” (v. 4). In confidence the writer adds, “I will give thanks for You answered me, You have become my salvation.”

Christians have every reason to give thanks to God for the abundant goodness received from His hand. Lincoln referenced these gifts “so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come” as “fruitful fields and healthful skies.” For most that has been true so “for the bounty of the earth” we give thanks.

The Psalmist offers thanks for being delivered from his trials and promises to express thanksgiving through a righteous life (v. 19). The righteous gates mentioned here lead to God and only the righteous may enter. The implication is clear. Professions of thanks must always be validated with conduct consistent with one’s words.

Thanksgiving is usually tied to deliverance but earthly deliverance is not always the outcome of life’s circumstances. Even here the Psalmist offers reason for thankfulness. “The

Lord is with me, I will not be afraid,” he declares in verse 6. Since God is with us “what can man do to me?” God will certainly rescue the believer in this life or the life to come.

Bible students recognize Psalm 118 as a Messianic Psalm and the most often quoted Psalm in the New Testament. The Palm Sunday crowd quoted verse 26 as they hailed Jesus as “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Both apostles Peter and Paul quote verse 22, “The stone the builder rejected has become the capstone,” as a reference to Jesus.

Centuries before the birth of Jesus, the Psalmist pointed toward God who “has made His light shine upon us” (v. 27). The apostle John uses this theme to describe Jesus as the “light of the world.” Even though Thanksgiving may be a secular holiday, every Christian cannot help but give thanks to God for His redeeming love expressed through Jesus Christ.

With abundant reasons to praise God, we join with the Psalmist to declare this Thanksgiving that “You are my God and I will give You thanks. You are my God and I will exalt You” (v. 28). 🙏

**“Even though
Thanksgiving may be a
secular holiday, every
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but give thanks to God
for His redeeming love
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Jesus Christ.”**

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

NEED FOR PRAYER

When we pray for our military around the world, I hope we’ll also remember to pray for many other Americans who are diligently serving our U.S. government in other

roles. I have a daughter and son-in-law who work in one of our U.S. embassies in the Middle East.

Every time I watch the news or read *TAB* I am reminded of the dangerous threats to all Christians and

Americans in general.

Jeanette Williamson
Daphne, Ala. 🙏





"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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Bob Logan, a Pasadena, Calif., resident who specializes in church growth and church planting leadership development, speaks during a breakout session to church planters at the Alabama Church Planter Network dinner Nov. 9.

'You are not alone'



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Alabama Church Planter Network dinner provides encouragement, inspiration

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

As seats in the designated area of Samford University's Pete Hanna Center began to fill up so did the volume level. All around the room boisterous greetings and energetic handshakes were exchanged. The atmosphere was exactly what Lamar Duke, an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting at the Alabama State Board of Missions (SBOM), was hoping it would feel like — a family reunion.

This was the beginning of the Alabama Church Planter Network dinner, held Nov. 9 as a lead-in to the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference and the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC), which were Nov. 10 and 11-12, respectively.

More than 180 members of the church planter network gathered to be encouraged and inspired through worship, fellowship and mentorship. SBOM seeks to plant 220 churches by 2020, a goal leaders have been working on since January 2013. Since the goal's initiation SBOM has provided initial funding for 38 church plants, said Rick Barnhart, director of the SBOM office of associational missions and church planting.

Hearing personal experiences

During the meal Chelsea Westover Church's worship band led participants in singing before hearing guest speaker Bob Logan, a Pasadena, Calif., resident who specializes in church growth and church planting leadership development.

As a former church planter Logan's personal experiences tied him to the men and women before him.

"Church planters are my favorite people. Middle school students are my second favorite group," he said with a chuckle.

Logan said his main goal was to let church planters know "you are not alone."

"Jesus is going with you into the community," he said. Using Matthew 16:18, Logan encouraged planters with God's promise to build His church and the gates of Hell will not be against it.

"The Bible does not command us to start churches — that's Jesus' job. [God] commanded us to make disciples," he said. Logan stressed that prayer partners are the "best investment" any church planter can make. He reminded participants "prayer is not just preparation for the battle — it is the battle."

Valuing relationships with one's spouse and fellow planters is also vital to grounding a church plant. "Planters have more in common with each other than they do with leaders within their own denominational community," Logan said. "You can learn from each other, support each other, grow with each other."

He challenged planters to form relationships with at least two fellow planters and ask each other what's working, what's not working, what is being learned, what needs to change and what the next steps are. Each planter should take on the job of encouraging, comforting and urging one another, Logan said. At some point each planter needs to hear "yes you can," "yes you will" and "yes you must."

Referring to 2 Timothy 2:2 and Romans 6, Logan encouraged planters to have an action plan when discipling young believers and for that plan to manifest into a multiplication movement. "They haven't been harvested yet — the ones who are going to lead that move-

ment," he said, stressing how new believers should be disciplined to make more new believers.

Logan concluded with the image from Revelation 7 where it illustrates people from every tribe and tongue gathered around God worshipping together. "That's the goal. (Gleaning believers) from every facet from every segment of society — that is the mission that God has called you to do."

From there the crowd divided into planters and planters' spouses for breakout sessions designed to minister more specifically to participants.

'Barnabas debrief'

Church planters participated in what Logan called a "Barnabas debrief." Each man was able to discuss struggles and passions in a one-on-one setting with fellow planters. Each received a copy of Logan's book "Becoming Barnabas: A Ministry of Coming Alongside" and learned about ways to solve common church planting problems in the Q-and-A time.

Planters' spouses gathered around Mary Beth Culbreth, wife of Dennis Culbreth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jasper. The couple has planted churches in Atlanta and Virginia, allowing Mary Beth to speak from experience about the struggles church planters face.

She encouraged the women to be astonished by God, pray protection over their family and know planting cannot take root without God's presence.

"Our husbands cannot go without God's presence," she said. "You cannot do what you have to do without God's presence. Don't try."

Barnhart and Duke, who serves as the SBOM church planting strategist, presented a report about church planting at the ABSC annual meeting Nov. 11. In it the duo told participants four keys to church planting: initiating small groups, making disciples, learning how to develop and train church leadership and instituting a cycle of churches planting churches.

"We must all be about penetrating the 'pagan pool' for Christ," Barnhart said. ☛

Take comfort in God

Express your heart, concerns to God in loneliness, entrust Him to take care of you

By **Jeremy Pierre**

Dean of students and assistant professor of biblical counseling
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Loneliness is a misty kind of thing. Loneliness is not quite the same as being alone. It is not necessarily solved by having people around. Synonyms include solitude, seclusion and estrangement, but none of those words are quite right to describe the sense of loneliness that many feel.

At the outset we should recognize that loneliness is in part a desire for human companionship, a desire that is appropriate and good. We were designed as human beings for fellowship and it is a necessary aspect of spiritual and physical health. God said it was not good for Adam to be alone and gave him a suitable helper (Gen. 2:18). Marital companionship is displayed in the Song of Solomon as the two lovers long for one another's presence.

We find companionship in friendship

as well. Scripture says Jonathan loved his friend David "as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:3). The apostle Paul was strengthened by the presence of his friends, particularly Barnabas and Timothy. Jesus Himself was saddened when His disciples sleepily ignored His sorrow (Mark 14:32-42). A person longing for companionship wants something good God created. But desiring companionship is not the only thing that makes up loneliness.



PIERRE

Loneliness also can be an inappropriate way of looking to human relationships to provide something God never designed them to provide: relevance and belonging. A common assumption is that human relationships make us relevant. Loneliness is often painful because hidden within it is a self-condemning pronouncement of irrelevance. People feel as if they do not belong and thus are unimportant. So a Friday evening alone at home becomes a ruinous sign of irrelevance. However, God

did not design human companionship to be our source of relevance and belonging. Psalm 31 is a great example of viewing loneliness theologically. David, a man who knew what it was to be quite popular, bemoans, "Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel" (11-12).

In other words even after all those years of popularity human relationships had failed him. People act in their own interests so when David benefitted people they loved him. When David got in the way of their interests he was cast aside as unimportant, forgotten and irrelevant. What was true for David is true today. People treat one another according to the contours of their own interests.

This is why we need the Lord Jesus Christ. We naturally treat others according to selfish desires and too often we pull away from them when they fail to give us what we want relationally. Loneliness can be our way of reacting against others for not doing what we want them to do for us.

But David did not merely complain about the state of the world. He did so in a way that moved toward trust, specifically in the loving acceptance of the Almighty God. He continues, "But I trust in you, O Lord; I say,

'You are my God.' My times are in your hand" (14-15a).

Only this level of trust frees us to serve others rather than be quietly embittered when they do not meet our expectations.

Jesus Christ trusted God in this way. As He faced true abandonment not only by His friends but also by His Father He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The answer to this question is: Because that is what sin deserves. Jesus was rejected so that anyone who trusts Him can be welcomed. Jesus was abandoned so that we could belong. If God sacrificed His own Son to

bring His people to Him, is He not trustworthy?

Practical steps

How can you do this practically? Two simple steps come to mind. First express your heart to God in your loneliness. You were designed to express your concerns to God and entrust them to Him. Second determine not to use others for your own ends. Pray for a heart to serve not to be served. Often lonely people reach out to others only to fill something in themselves. This is not the way of Christ who frees us to serve others and trust God to take care of the rest.

Don't let loneliness tell you the lie that you are irrelevant. Let the gospel tell you the truth: You are accepted. 🙏

"Don't let loneliness tell you the lie that you are irrelevant. Let the gospel tell you the truth (that) you are accepted."

"Pray for a heart to serve not to be served.

Often lonely people reach out to others

only to fill something in themselves."

Acknowledge lonely feelings, develop strategy to cope, chaplain/counselor says

(continued from page 1)

difficult to make decisions or causing a person to make hasty and unwise decisions."

Though grief and loneliness are often associated, any transition can open the door to feelings of isolation, Yoakum said. Job changes, marriages, births, relocation and retirement may be positive changes but they are changes nonetheless.

"Generally any time you go through an adjustment it creates some anxiety," Yoakum said.

Dealing with the holidays

Holidays are a good example of situations that require flexibility. Even though they happen every year, holidays force people to change their normal routines, Yoakum said. People begin to feel the

pressure of increased responsibilities and increased demands on their time.

"Lots of hope is put into the expectation that this is going to be a fantastic Christmas yet things can turn out different than expected," Yoakum said.

Even if the differences are neutral someone who is already experiencing some loneliness may have trouble adapting to the changes. Loss and grief can exacerbate the situation, leading people to feel emotionally isolated especially if they cannot express their feelings to others.

"The person may feel 'not quite right' or have a lonely feeling going from one place to the next [and have] difficulty being in the moment," Yoakum said. "Then they wonder, 'what's wrong with me? I'm supposed to be happy.'"

Such feelings should not be overlooked,

Hobson said. Instead he advises people to acknowledge their feelings and develop a strategy to cope with them.

"You have to change your thinking," he said. "If you recognize that you are going to feel lonelier during certain times you need to have a strategy. Begin ahead of time and put a plan in place to do things you need to do to deal with your loneliness."

Have a plan

Having a plan in place can help a lonely person avoid what might be the worst response to loneliness — pushing others away.

"The lonely person feels that nobody cares so they become very guarded and self-protective. Even if someone reaches out to them they may think the person doesn't really care and is doing it because of guilt or another reason," Hobson said.

When family members and friends who reach out feel like their efforts are not welcomed they may stop trying. As a result the lonely person's interpersonal skills begin to weaken and the loneliness continues to grow.

Hobson advises family and friends to seek to understand the ambivalence that loneliness brings and to make the effort to keep their loved one socially and emotionally engaged. Simple actions like a telephone call or an invitation to go out for coffee may seem small but they are huge steps toward building quality relationships.

"When people are lonely they really do want you to contact them. They do want you to call or visit. They need the relationship even though they seem to be guarding against it," he said. 🙏

8 tips

Tips for understanding, overcoming loneliness

Loneliness is a normal human emotion we all have experienced in life. Realizing that loneliness is an emotion — a feeling — and that feelings can be changed is a starting point for how to deal with loneliness. Here are some practical ways to understand and overcome loneliness:

1. Seek to understand the root of your emotions. Feeling lonely means something is missing from your life. When you begin to realize what you are lacking in your life you can get to work on a solution to address this feeling.

2. Change your thoughts. Observe any negative self-talk and look for faulty assumptions in your thinking about your situation. Decide to begin positive self-talk about your situation in life.

3. Improve your communication skills. Most relationships benefit from better communication. Learn to say what you are feeling but also learn to listen to others. Be assertive and call family and friends to share how you are feeling.

4. Be open to meeting new people and engaging in new experiences. Join a gym, take a class, join a support group or begin a new hobby.

5. Help others by volunteering at a local hospital, soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Getting the focus off ourselves and helping others can help change lonely feelings. Volunteer to serve through your local church in a ministry to others.

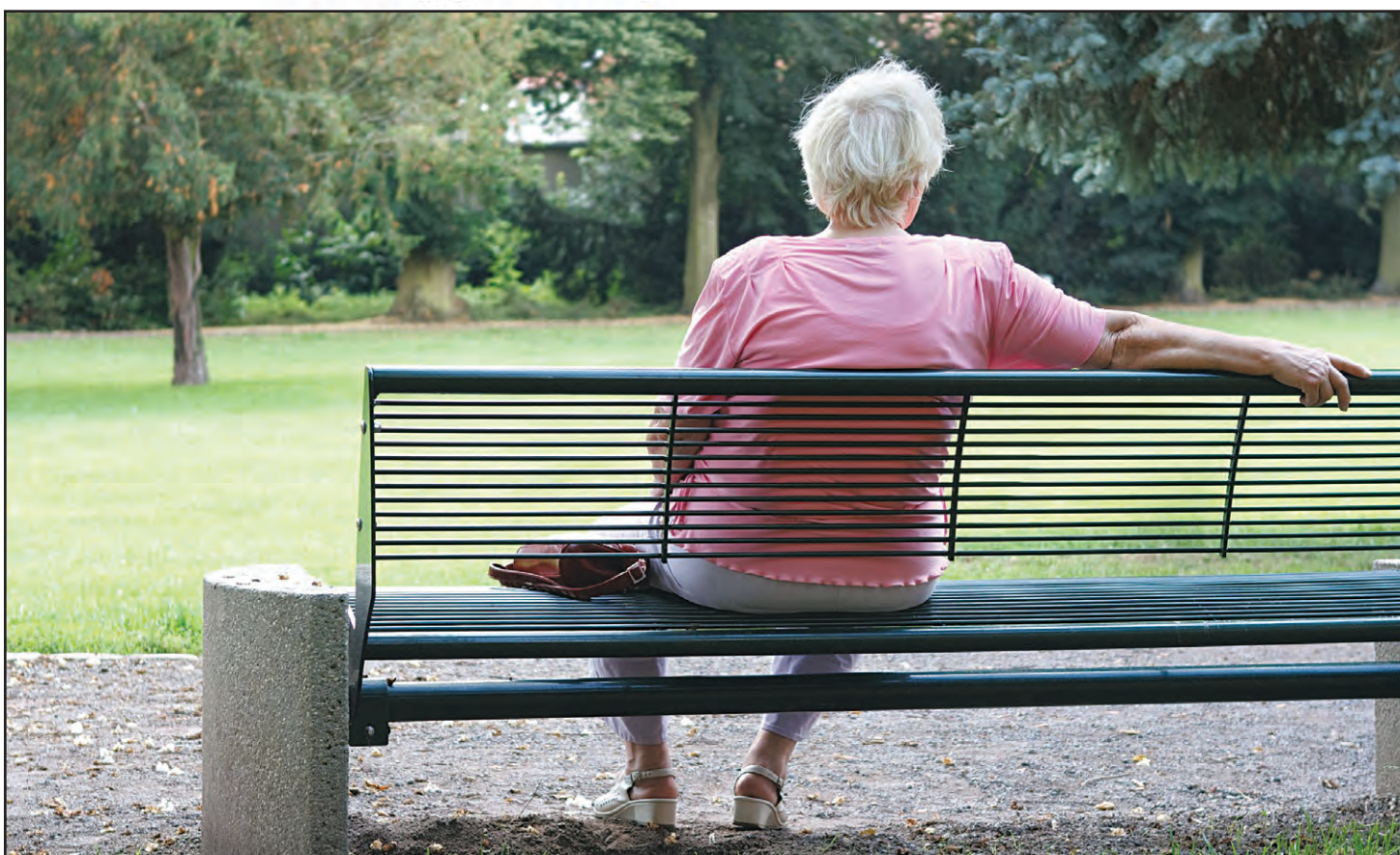
6. Get up and get out. Go to a local coffee shop to read and use a computer there instead of doing those things alone. Go to the gym instead of exercising alone.

7. Nourish friendships through time, kindness and attention. As you give attention to others they will likely give you attention in return.

8. Seek help from a pastor or medical/mental health professional when feelings of loneliness do not change. 🙏

Source: Renay Carroll
Pathways Professional Counseling

Be assertive and call family and friends to share how you are feeling.



123rf.com

Are we lonely?

Causes of loneliness vary from circumstances to personality types

By Renay Carroll, MA, LPC, NCC
Pathways Professional Counseling

Perhaps you have seen the commercial of the man who goes to a local cell phone carrier to turn in his old phone for a new one. The female voice on the old phone seems to have developed an emotional relationship with the man. The voice reminds him of all the time he and his phone have spent together and all the experiences they have had together, causing him to question his decision to get a new phone. The commercial illustrates how we have become a society increasingly more connected to electronic devices and as a result less connected to people.

Stephen Marche asked the question in *The Atlantic*, “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?” He writes, “Social media — from Facebook to Twitter — has made us more densely networked than ever. Yet for all this connectivity new research suggests we have never been lonelier (or more narcissistic) and this loneliness is making us mentally and physically ill.”

Need for social interaction

Jessica Olien recently reported in her article “Loneliness Is Deadly” in *Slate* that people without adequate social interaction were twice as likely to die prematurely, stating that social isolation impairs immune function and boosts inflammation. In its General Social Survey, The National Science Foundation found that one in every four people they interviewed had no one to talk to about their personal failures and/or successes. If family members were removed from the list of people interviewees could confide in then the number of people who lack close personal

relationships doubles to more than half of Americans. Needless to say loneliness is increasingly becoming a larger societal issue.

The causes of loneliness vary from circumstances to personality types.

The breakdown of the family — separation, divorce and death of a spouse and/or family members — and leaving or changing jobs can all be causes of loneliness.

The use of electronics such as televisions, computers and smartphones may contribute to the problem as can the increasing dominance of social media in our lives.

We can feel lonely while alone or with many people around us. The introvert may need only a few significant relationships to experience connectedness while the extrovert may need a broad network of family and friends to share life with.

Lifestyle and culture changes can make it difficult to establish community and create a sense of shared belonging. Increased work hours, longer commutes to jobs and the growth of two career and single parent families have caused us to spend less time on developing community in our lives. Many families struggle to maintain a shared sense of belonging to each other in their marriages and parenting much less to those outside their immediate family.

Increasingly our culture’s emphasis on individualism, which highly values personal freedom, needs to be balanced with the innate desire we all have to be known and under-

stood. We are interdependent on each other because of this innate desire yet we often avoid the community we need to experience in order to have this intimacy in our lives.

For some, loneliness increases during the holiday season. Holiday celebrations can be filled with wonderful memories with family and friends but as relationships change

through the years feelings of loneliness can set in. As relationships change because of death, divorce and distance traditional holiday celebrations will be different. Loneliness can replace the feelings of love, joy and peace sought during this time of year.

In order to overcome loneliness during the holiday season we can find comfort in celebrat-

ing with our brothers and sisters in Christ through our local church. By focusing on the true meaning of the holiday season we can connect with God and others in genuine relationships of peace, joy and love. When we give to others during the holidays we take the focus off our feelings and seek to enhance the welfare of others.

As believers we can take comfort in our relationship with God, knowing that He never changes. He is always ready to meet us where we are in life to remind us of His love as well as help us while we experience feelings of loneliness. God made us to relate to each other and Him. He instituted the church so believers would relate to each other as the Body of Christ. We all need Him and we need each other to resolve feelings of loneliness. 🙏



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BESSEMER

► **The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**, will have a special Hanging of the Green service Nov. 30, 6 p.m. Child care will be available. Bill McCall is pastor. ► **Bob Weber** is the new pastor of **Valley Creek Church, Hueytown**. He previously served as pastor of Camden Church. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in history from the University of Mobile, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and is currently enrolled in the doctor of ministry studies at New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Charlette, have five children.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will host Glory Bound in concert Nov. 30, 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited. Hosea Parker is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **First Church, Glencoe**, will hold a snowflake festival Nov. 30, 4-6 p.m. with free food, games, a photo booth and more. This will kick off the 5th annual Christmas Light Show. The lights will run Nov. 30-Dec. 31 from 5-10 on Sunday-Thursday nights and 5-12 on Friday and Saturday nights. For information visit www.facebook.com.

com/glencoelights. Keith Hudson is pastor.

HALE

► **Moundville Church** will hold the Whosoever Whoville Christmas House on Dec. 4-5, 6:30-8:30 nightly. This reenactment of How the Grinch Stole Christmas will begin in the family fellowship hall with refreshments and group organizations. The first group will begin at 6:30 and the last group will go through at 8:30. Jason Duckett is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Gary Cornelius** is the new director of education and young adult ministries for **Woodridge Church, Mobile**. He previously served as associate pastor of adults and outreach for Calvary Church, Dothan. He also served at First Church, Gulf Shores, and First Church, Enterprise. He holds a bachelor of science degree in business administration from the University of Mobile and a



CORNELIUS

master of Christian education from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Julie, have two children.

MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will hold a fifth Sunday singing Nov. 30, 5:30 p.m. The Kempters will perform. A soup and chili fellowship dinner will follow the singing. A love offering will be collected. Chad Underwood is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Richard Richie** has resigned from **Flint Church, Decatur**, to pursue a time of sabbatical, prayer, Bible study and guest preaching and teaching. Richie has pastored for more than 20 years, having served churches in Alabama, Maryland, Indiana and Virginia. He is currently one of five Alabama trustees serving on the International Mission Board. To contact Richie call 256-303-9602 or email rlrichie@hotmail.com.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Jon Ferguson** is the new pastor for **First Church, Mount Olive**. He previously served as pastor of Forest Park Church, Randleman, N.C. He holds a bachelor of science degree in religion from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.; a master of divinity from Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.; and a doctorate of ministry from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Julie, have two children.

SIPSEY

► **Ed Steelman** has resigned as pastor of **New Hope Church, Berry**. He served at New Hope for seven and a half years. He previously served as pastor of Rosedale Church, Tuscaloosa. He also has served at Belleville Church, Repton, and Indian Lake Church, Northport. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Memphis, a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary and a juris doctor degree from Nashville Y.M.C.A. Night Law School (now the Nashville School of Law). He is married to Katherine.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Tuskegee Lee Association** will host a Ministers' and Wives' Christmas Banquet at Providence Church, Opelika, on Dec. 8, 6:30 p.m. The program is provided by Vince and Amy Helms. To make a reservation call 334-745-0588 or email bkpreach@yahoo.com. Rusty J. Sowell is pastor. Bill King is director of missions. ❧

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Keith Stanley Loomis *SBOM associate, former youth minister dies*

Keith Stanley Loomis, an associate in the office of collegiate and student ministries at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), died Nov. 12 after a five-year battle with cancer. He was 54.

Loomis received his education from Auburn University at Montgomery and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He served in youth and music ministry positions at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery; Redland Baptist Church, Wetumpka; and Terrace Acres Baptist Church, White Settlement, Texas. He also served as associate director for World Changers (formerly Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.).

Rick Lance, executive director for SBOM, said, "Throughout his struggle and health challenges Keith was a consistent Christian witness who never lost the joy of the Lord. ... To say that he will be missed is an understatement."

Mike Nuss, SBOM director of the office of collegiate and student ministries, said, "Keith was incredibly passionate about reaching and discipling students — that was his life's calling and he worked at it with his whole being."

Loomis is survived by his wife, Kathy, and their three sons. (Maggie Walsh)



LOOMIS

J. Holland Thomas *Former FBC Leeds pastor Thomas dies at 92*

J. Holland Thomas, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Leeds, died Oct. 7. He was 92.



THOMAS

Thomas graduated from Menlo High School in Menlo, Ga. (now Chattanooga High School in Summerville, Ga.); Bob Jones College in Cleveland, Tenn. (now Bob Jones University in Greenville, S.C.) with a bachelor of arts degree in English and religion; and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., with a master of divinity.

He also served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Piedmont; First Baptist Church, Boaz; and several other churches in Kentucky and Georgia.

Thomas is preceded in death by his first wife, Edna. He is survived by his second wife, Emma; four children; two stepchildren; seven grandchildren; and 14 grandchildren. (TAB)

Robert Cooper Weaver *'National Pioneer in Deaf Ministries' dies*

Robert Cooper Weaver, brother of Mobile College (now University of Mobile) founding president William Weaver, died Nov. 5. He was 86.

A Talladega native, Weaver is a graduate of Howard College (now Samford University) and founded Talladega Community Church for the Deaf. He is the first recipient of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) Foundation's Volunteer of the Year Award and NASCAR's Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award for his work with AIDB. He also was a recipient of the National Pioneer in Deaf Ministries Award.

Weaver funded the Robert C. Weaver Chapel at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega and was the first director of AIDB's Hawkins Chapel.

He was preceded in death by his brothers, William and Davis, and is survived by his sister, Ann Weaver Armstrong. (TAB)



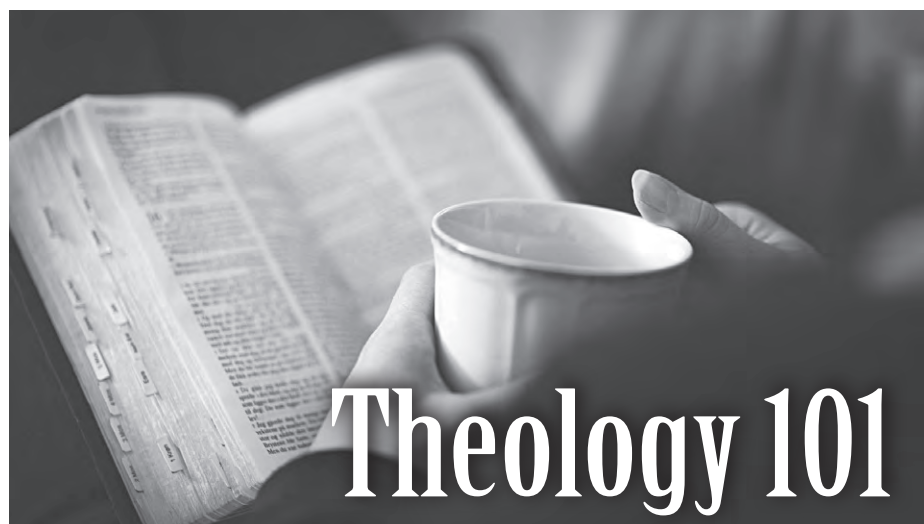
WEAVER

ANCCM holds its annual meeting



Photo courtesy of Donna McCullough

The Alabama Network of Christian Community Ministers held its annual meeting Nov. 10 in Birmingham. Newly elected officers are (l to r) Lisa Rose, secretary; Donna McCullough, president; Joycelyn Carrell, treasurer; and Virginia Alexander, second vice president. Not pictured is Lou Ann Raughton, first vice president. During the meeting, Dianne Lowe of Etowah Baptist Association and Linda Pair of Birmingham Baptist Association were recognized for years of community ministry as they are retiring. Andrew Trezona of Challenge Evangelism Literature was the guest speaker during the meeting.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Holy Spirit and Holy Living

Walking Wisely (Part 3 of 3)

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

Completing our look at walking wisely, we come to the part of Ephesians 5:15–21 that tells us we are unwise to attempt the Christian life without maintaining Holy Spirit fullness. After speaking of the wisdom of walking according to the will of the Lord, the paragraph continues, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18).

This is a good verse to raise the question, “What’s in a verb?” The verb is “be filled.” Four considerations of this verb help inform a wise walk that is undertaken with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. First the verb is an imperative. This tells us that Spirit-fullness is not an option to be chosen or neglected at will. As a command it is expected of us.

Then the verb is a passive one. This tells us that Spirit-fullness is not our achievement but something we receive from beyond ourselves. Active verbs describe what we do but passive ones refer to what is done to us or for us. Being filled with the Spirit is a divine action upon and within our hearts.

Third the verb is in the present tense. In the New Testament this is the tense of continuous or repeated action. Spirit-fullness is thus not just a one-time encounter. We are to be continuously filled as we face challenges and opportunities that require more than human wisdom and power.

For every believer

Finally the verb is plural in number. This tells us the command is for every believer not just a select few who might happen to be in visible ministries. Fullness of the Holy Spirit is a privilege God grants to every Christian. We are never wiser than when we take to heart what God makes available. After all the Father in heaven knows best.

After issuing the command about being filled our passage goes on to suggest evidences that testify to walking wisely by living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Praise is one such evidence. Praise, both public and private,

is evidence of Spirit-fullness, which our passage expresses as “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (v.19). The public part is “speaking to one another” and the private part is “in your heart.”

Spirit of thanksgiving

Another evidence of Spirit-fullness is gratitude. The continuation of the passage says, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 20). Walking wisely by maintaining the fullness of the Holy Spirit begets a spirit of thanksgiving, both for the grand and the commonplace blessings God gives.

At the end of the paragraph is yet another indication of the fullness of the Spirit, which is mutual submission. The final clause of the paragraph adds, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ” (v. 21). When the Holy Spirit is controlling a believer such characteristics as a boastful, self-assertive or overbearing spirit is displaced by Christ-like qualities, such as humility and restraint. Given free reign in us the Holy Spirit makes us willing to submit to others in appropriate ways.

In summary our last three studies about walking in wisdom set before us the winsome traits of living carefully, using time profitably, seeking to know and do God’s will and maintaining the fullness of the Spirit. To live below these aspirations is to go about the Christian life unwisely, knowing that we will come up short of God’s expectations. ☞

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.



‘Thankful for years past’

EMA holds final meeting, disbands without regret

By June Mathews
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Though the Nov. 10 Education Music Association (EMA) banquet at First Baptist Church, Birmingham, marked the organization’s final meeting, the mood was anything but somber.

In fact participants joyfully visited with one another during the meal and laughed hysterically at the musical antics of the ever-popular Three On A String, a multi-talented trio that has been entertaining audiences throughout Alabama for more than 40 years.

According to longtime members of EMA, fun and laughter have long been hallmarks of the organization founded some three to four decades ago to provide a support and networking component for non-pastor ministers.

Retired children’s minister Doris Collins said, “By serving on the entertainment committee several times I was so blessed to be able to introduce some of my friends to EMA, such as Doug Berky, David Girard and Kay DeKalb Smith, who entertained us with wonderful humor. And we always know that laughter is good for the soul.”

Johnny Kilgore, a retired associate pastor of family ministries, music and senior adults, also recalled EMA banquets as times of laughter and entertainment. But on at least one occasion the laugh was on him. In 2005 Kilgore won the Alabama Singing Men’s Paul Stewart Ministry Service Award but didn’t realize the presenter was talking about him until the very end.

“I was just wondering who he was talking about and lo and behold he called my name out. I was totally shocked,” he said. “Everybody around the table was laughing because they were more responding to how I reacted to it.”

So with its tradition of mirth and merriment it was only fitting that EMA shut down on an upbeat note. Despite the finality, however, the decision to disband was made without regrets.

Dale Huff, EMA’s advisor, said, “The

original purpose of EMA was to give ministers other than pastors an opportunity to meet with ministers in similar roles — ministers of music, ministers of education, ministers of youth and other staff ministry roles — giving them a time to be together and have their own meeting while the Pastors Conference was going on.

“Over the years some of these types of ministers have formed their own organizations so it seems like the original purpose of EMA for them has been fulfilled,” said Huff of the Alabama Baptist State

Board of Missions. “We’re thankful for the years past and for what has been accomplished, and it seems like the right time to make this transition.”

During its final business session EMA treasurer Larry Morrison shared a resolution that monies remaining in the treasury after expenses would be equally divided between the Paul Stewart Scholarship Fund and the Religious Education Scholarship Fund.

It also was announced that Johnny Arnett, minister of music and senior adults at Linden Baptist Church, was

the winner of the annual Stewart award. A member of the Alabama Singing Men for 22 years, Arnett has served on several committees including a stint as chairman of the current activities committee.

Ministry experience

During his ministry career Arnett has served churches in Alabama and Louisiana as minister of music, minister of youth and minister of senior adults. A native of Talladega, he is married to his high school sweetheart, Jenny Garrison Arnett. The Arnetts have one son and five grandchildren.

A plaque also was presented to Greg Hollis, minister of music and education at Union Hill Baptist, Oneonta, in appreciation for his service as EMA’s last president.

“I feel like I’m standing on the shoulders of the folks who have gone before,” he said, “and I count it as an honor and privilege to have served.” ☞



Photo by June Mathews

Harold Newberry (left), retired music minister and chairman of Alabama Singing Men’s Paul Stewart Ministry Service Award committee, presents Johnny Arnett, minister of music and senior adults at Linden Baptist Church, with the annual Stewart award at the final meeting of the Education Music Association at FBC Birmingham on Nov. 10.

'Becoming Home'

Church leaders learn about orphan care ministries

Imagine the impact on the state's foster care system if every Alabama Baptist church had at least one foster family in its congregation. That's around 3,300 foster families. If every church had two foster families, then Alabama Baptist churches could take care of the 5,000 kids — at any given time — needing foster homes in the state.

It's a dream of leaders at the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), especially of its president Rod Marshall.

To help Alabama Baptists catch the same vision Marshall served on a panel with five others Nov. 12 during a breakfast event focused on orphan care, *Becoming Home: The Church Responds to the Fatherless in Alabama*.

Nearly 70 Alabama pastors and leaders attended the ABCH breakfast event in Birmingham.

Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, moderated the discussion among panelists.

Each is deeply involved in orphan care ministry and has a passion to help churches engage in this biblical mandate.

Serving with Marshall as panelists were Polly Bice and Johnny Grimes of Altar84; Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills; Rob Hatfield, associate pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville; and Todd Wilson, pastor of Grace Covenant Baptist Church, Hoover.

Also featured was Stephen Reach, a former foster

child and current first-year student in the McWhorter School of Pharmacy at Samford University in Birmingham. Reach shared how Alabama Baptists' support of ABCH has made a difference in his life.

The primary goal of the event was to help leaders understand more about how their church can live out the Great Commission through foster care. Every-

one in attendance received a copy of the book "Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring — Living Out God's Heart for Orphans" by Jedd Medefind. Medefind is president of the Christian Alliance for Orphans, a national organization of which ABCH is a supporting partner.

Joey Hocutt, a development officer with The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, said the event spoke to his heart both professionally and personally.

"As an officer with the Baptist Foundation of Alabama, we are strongly linked to the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes in using our resources to grow money for the glory of God and the care of children. This meeting made me proud to be a part of this monumental and worthwhile task," he said.

"But I was also touched personally, in that God is calling me, my wife and our three daughters to get in and get involved, seeking out those specific ways we are being called not to just give resources but to go and put our hands on those who need a warm bed, a meal and to be shown the love of Christ." (Michelle Drashman, ABCH)



Alabama pastors and leaders hear from a panel about orphan care ministry and how their churches can help.

Photo by Jonathan Goode

For more information, visit alabamachild.org/churches or call 1-888-720-8805.

Samford's Fournier named state professor of year

Samford University geography professor Eric J. Fournier has been named the 2014 Alabama Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Fournier was recognized for his superb teaching skills at the U.S. Professors of the Year awards ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington on Nov. 20.

The U.S. Professors of the Year program salutes the most outstanding undergraduate instructors in the country — those who excel in teaching and positively influence the lives and careers of students.

A Samford faculty member since 1997, Fournier served as

chair of the geography department for 12 years. He was recently named director of Samford's Center for Teaching, Learning and Scholarship (CTLS), a position that will allow him to continue in his teaching role.

Fournier also has taught at the University of Georgia where he earned his Ph.D. degree and at Kennesaw State University in Georgia and Emmanuel College in Boston. A native of Biddeford, Maine, he received his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University in New York.

Fournier said his approaches to teaching have changed over the years.

"I have gradually given up on

'covering' the materials and tried to focus more on what students were actually learning," he said.

During his Samford tenure Fournier has been recognized with awards from Samford's Howard College of Arts and Sciences, the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). He is currently board chairman of NCGE.

Fournier also serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* and the *Journal of Geography*.

Samford provost J. Bradley Creed said, "[Fournier] is certainly deserving of this honor and Samford is fortunate to have such a gifted and committed colleague like [him] as a member of our community." (Samford)



FOURNIER

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Wealth gap 'tool of separation,' black preacher says

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. — Economic inequality is a "tool of separation" that continues to divide races in America 150 years after slavery, an African-American Baptist leader said in a recent lecture at Campbellsville University in Kentucky.

Stephen Thurston, former president of the National Baptist Convention of America, described the gap between rich and poor as "the fundamental foundation for many of the inequities that we face in this day and time."

He prescribed what he views as the proper Christian attitude toward wealth in the New Testament story of Zacchaeus the tax collector, who after recognizing his sin promised, "I'll give half of my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything I'll pay back four times as much."

2 state conventions elect first black president

NASHVILLE — The Tennessee Baptist Convention elected its first African-American president Nov. 11, three weeks after the Nevada Baptist Convention did the same.

Michael Ellis, 54, pastor of Impact Baptist Church, Memphis, is the new Tennessee convention president. Greg Fields, pastor of Nellis Baptist Church, Las Vegas, is the new Nevada convention president.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention also made history by electing its first black officer — Larry Young, pastor of Spangle Banner Baptist Church, Pace, Miss., as second vice president.

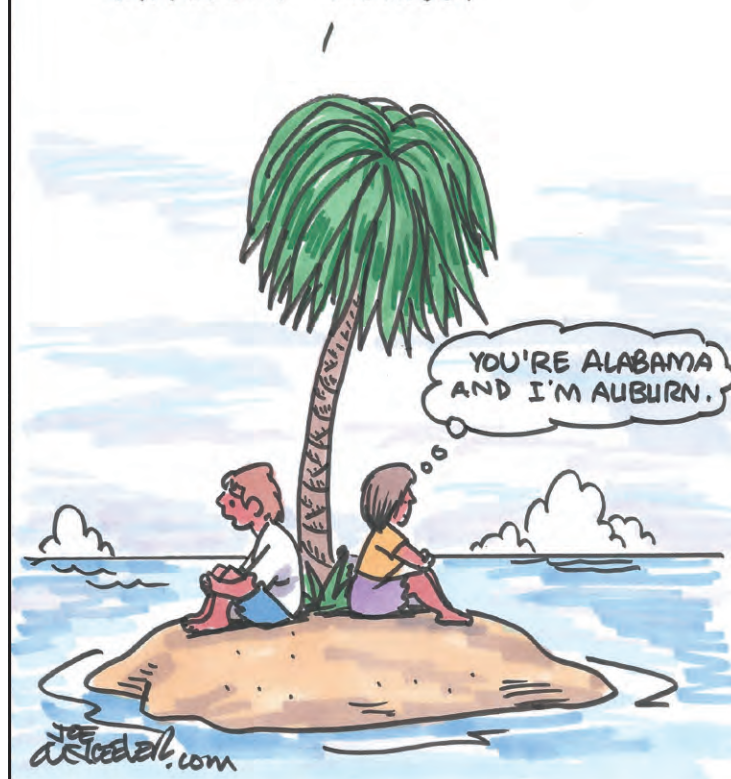
ERLC, SBTC partner to bolster marriage ministry

NASHVILLE — The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) received a financial gift of \$250,000 from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC).

The gift is for the purpose of training and equipping SBC pastors and church leaders across the nation for gospel-focused ministry to those who have same-sex attractions as well as strengthen biblical marriages in their churches. ☞

REFLECTIONS

"I DON'T KNOW, HONEY— IT'S LIKE WE LIVE IN TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS."



About Alabama
BY JIM WILLIAMS
jwillia@samford.edu

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

Election's Over, What's Next?

Alabama's state government operates on a four-year cycle known as a "quadrennium." Each quadrennium begins with the election of the governor and 140 members of the Legislature, all of whom serve four-year terms.

Their main job under Alabama law is to "plan and finance the services which they determine the state will provide for citizens."

In the recent election Republicans won the governorship and 70 percent of the seats in the Legislature. They will be in control for the next four years. What do they plan to accomplish during that time?

Since 1995 state law has obligated the governor, with the advice of the Legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee, to spell out a "four-year strategic plan." This plan is supposed to include goals for the improvement of state services, strategies for accomplishing them and measures to track progress along the way. It is intended to focus the state budget on investing in results.

Unfortunately the Budget Management Act, as it is known, has not received the attention it deserves. A process called SMART Budgeting was tried for a few years but allowed to lapse. Account-

ability has suffered as a result.

The best example of what strategic planning might do for all of Alabama government has been provided by the State Board of Education, which adopted Plan 2020 in 2012. Its main goals are to raise the state's high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and to ensure those graduates are ready for college and career. The plan contains a number of improvement strategies designed to enable the state to reach these goals. And it tracks a variety of measures to determine how our schools and our students are performing along the way.

Accountability tool

Plan 2020 focuses the attention of the state's public schools on achieving improved results. It is an important accountability tool. Already we've seen progress in the graduation rate, which has climbed from 72 percent in 2011 to 80 percent in 2013.

This sort of goal-oriented, strategic thinking should be applied across state government as the Budget Management Act requires, and the strategic plan developed by the governor and Legislature should be shared with the public. ☞

Illegal immigration

Churches urged to 'transcend' partisan politics

The Southern Baptist Convention's top spokesman on public policy said he fears President Barack Obama's decision to act unilaterally on immigration policy will do more harm than good.

Writing for *Time*, Russell Moore, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the president's action threatens what he called an emerging consensus in Congress around the need to reform the nation's immigration system.

In a speech to the nation Nov. 20 President Obama announced executive actions in three areas:

1. Crack down on illegal immigration at the border.
2. Prioritize deporting felons and not families.
3. Require certain undocumented immigrants to pass a criminal background check and pay taxes as they register to temporarily stay in the United States without fear of deportation.

Obama said the decision follows a year-and-a-half of inaction by the House of Representatives on a bipartisan bill passed by the Senate.

Moore said regardless of the debate over whether the president has authority to take such actions unilaterally, "this is an unwise and counterproductive move" that threatens a "remarkable consensus" emerging on immigration policy, uniting the left and right in the business community, agriculture, law enforcement and religion.

"My hope is that the Republicans in Congress will not allow the president's actions here to be a pretext for remaining in the rut of the status quo," Moore said. "Too many people are harmed by this broken system, many of them our brothers and sisters in

Christ. The lives of immigrant families, made in the image of God, are too important for political gamesmanship."

"More importantly I pray that our churches will transcend all of this posing and maneuvering that we see in Washington," Moore continued. "Whatever our agreements and disagreements on immigration policy, we as the Body of Christ are those who see every human life as reflecting the image of God. Immigrant communities are a great blessing not only to this country, but to our churches."

Some faith leaders including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops applauded the president's action.

"We've been on record asking the administration to do everything within its legitimate authority to bring relief and justice to our immigrant brothers and sisters," said Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, auxiliary Catholic bishop of Seattle and chairman of the bishops' Committee on Migration. "As pastors we welcome any efforts within these limits that protect individuals and protect and reunite families and vulnerable children."

SBC resolution on immigration

In 2011 the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution asking government leaders "to implement, with the borders secured, a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures, for those undocumented immigrants already living in our country."

It went on to specify that "this resolution is not to be construed as support for amnesty for any undocumented immigrant." (BNG)



I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:1-2

Children's Homes hosts pastors wives luncheon



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) hosted its first luncheon for pastors wives Nov. 11 in connection with the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting. Grace's Kitchen, a nonprofit feeding ministry, catered the luncheon where more than 40 women gathered at Metropolitan Church of God, Birmingham, to hear from guest speaker Ruba Abbassi of Jordan. Abbassi shared about her work with women in the Middle East through Arab Woman Today Ministries, a ministry she founded that includes personal training classes and a radio program. Mary Shaw, wife of Mike Shaw, former Alabama Baptist State Convention president and retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, and Mary Minor of ABCH provided special music during the luncheon.

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Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 Years Ago November 1964

Convention Climax: The climax to the Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting in Mobile on Nov. 10–12 was the Youth Night program on Thursday night. It was at the new Mobile Municipal Auditorium with 10,000 Baptist church members from across the state attending the program. Featured were Baptist young people from the churches and college campuses. Three college students who gave their testimonies were: Dorothy Kay Riggins, Tuscaloosa; Mike Fink Jr., Birmingham; and Jimmy Howell, Troy.

40 Years Ago November 1974

Pair of Firsts: The 1974 Alabama Baptist Communications Award was presented to Sybil

Wright, assistant city editor of the *Mobile Press*, and Sylvia Hart, religious news editor of the *Mobile Press Register*. They received the awards at the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. For the first time since the award was begun in Alabama, two recipients were named. It was also the first time the award had gone to a woman.

30 Years Ago November 1984

162nd Birthday: Alabama Baptists celebrated the 162nd birthday of the state convention at the meeting at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham with Edgar Arendall as host pastor and Wallace Henley as president. In the convention sermon

Lewis Marler called attention to the urgent need of helping those who hurt. Sessions for this convention add a significant chapter to the story that began in 1823.

20 Years Ago November 1994

End of an Era: Hudson D. Baggett, editor of *The Alabama Baptist* since 1966, died of a massive heart attack Nov. 17. He and his wife, June, were taking a day's vacation at Point Clear following the Nov. 15–16 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in nearby Mobile. Troy Morrison, executive secretary-treasurer of the convention, said, "Dr. Hudson Baggett's death leaves a numbness all across the Alabama Baptist State Convention. His fairness and forthrightness as editor of *The*

Alabama Baptist endeared him to each of us. "There was never any question about his love for the Lord and his love for Alabama Baptists." Despite a turbulent pre-convention atmosphere, a record number of Alabama Baptist messengers held a calm annual meeting turning back drastic measures to deal with Samford University and the University of Mobile. The 3,135 messengers meeting at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, left the controversies in the hands of committees: a Samford Study Committee appointed to study Samford's board of trustees' decision to elect their own successors and a special committee that had reached a compromise agreement with the University of Mobile on its Nicaraguan campus.

10 Years Ago November 2004

History Made at Convention: Henry Cox, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, became the first Alabama Baptist in recorded history to go through the three state convention offices in consecutive terms. With his election as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention during the Nov. 16–17 annual meeting in Montgomery, he is on his way to serve six straight years as a convention officer (two one-year terms in each of the vice president positions and the president's role if re-elected next year). Messengers to the meeting also passed four resolutions, one of which affirmed marriage as between a man and a woman. ☞

Want to know GOD?

By Pastor Larry Doster
Lee Street Baptist Church, Enterprise

As a teenage boy I attended my first tent revival. One night I was hanging around after the service with my friend from school and the evangelist began to talk with my friend about how he could know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. He shared from John 3:16 and Romans 10:13. The one word he emphasized was "whosoever." The evangelist asked my friend if he knew what "whosoever" meant. He explained that anyone who trusts in Jesus Christ as his Savior will be saved. As he explained "whosoever," I realized I was included. The word has stuck with me ever since.

Webster's dictionary defines "whosoever" as "whatever person." Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 that One (Jesus Christ) died for "all." The word "all" does not leave anyone out just like the word "whosoever." We understand from 2 Peter 3:9 that "it is not God's will for 'anyone' to perish but that 'all' should come to repentance." Jesus Christ loves you and me enough to do whatever it would take to save us from sin so we will not perish eternally. Romans 5:8 reminds us that "God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Though I did not care about Jesus Christ, He cared for me and did what it took for me to have eternal life.

When Jesus died on the cross He carried the sin of the whole world upon Himself. He died to save "whosoever" would come to Him. God loves you and me. He sent His Son to be Savior so you could be part of His family and enjoy an eternity with Him.

In coming to know Jesus Christ you find that His love is for all mankind. The good news does not discriminate based on race, color, nationality or depth of sin. Every man and woman, boy and girl is precious to Him.

Would you like to trust Jesus Christ today for salvation if you haven't already? Ask Him to forgive you and be your Lord and Savior. You are included in "whosoever." ☞

Charitable giving in cash increased in 2013

Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) announced in its Annual State of Giving Report on Nov. 17 that cash charitable giving to ECFA-accredited organizations increased 6.9 percent between 2012 and 2013. It reflects total cash donations of \$11.6 billion in 2013, an increase from the previous year's \$10.9 billion.

ECFA reported a 6.4 percent increase in giving to its members for 2012, compared with a 1.7 percent increase the previous year.

Giving to evangelical churches and ministries outpaced giving to secular charities in 2013. The Giving USA report for the same time period reflected a giving increase of 4.4 percent for 2013, compared with 2012.

"The second consecutive year of increases among ECFA-accredited organizations and a boost to secular charities last year sends a strong signal that charitable giving is rebounding," said Dan Busby, ECFA president.

Total revenue also increased 8.2 percent to \$23.1 billion for 2013.

The most significant cash giving increases occurred in the following categories:

Camps and conferences, 18.8 percent; children's homes, 13.9 percent; student/youth, 12.3 percent; orphan care, 12 percent; medical, 10.7 percent; relief and development, 10.2 percent; child sponsorship, 10.0 percent; and leadership training, 10.0 percent. (In Christ Communications)

MARKET PLACE

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Byne Memorial Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., is receiving resumés for the position of senior pastor. Pastoral experience and SBC seminary preferred. Byne is a Southern Baptist church holding to "traditional Baptist" Biblical views. Please submit resumés to: Donna Pinson, church administrator, 2832 Ledo Road, Albany, GA 31707, or dpinson@byne.org.

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.

WORSHIP LEADER: Enon Baptist Church of Montevallo, Ala., is seeking a bivocational worship leader to lead blended worship. Please send resumés to: Music Committee, 4994 Co Rd 18, Montevallo, AL 35115, or to: lyns336@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Hill Spring Baptist Church on Eliza Jordan Road, Mobile, Ala., is search-

ing for a part-time minister of music to direct a choir and lead congregational worship with a mixture of praise songs and hymns. We have services Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. If interested, please email: bghinson7@bellsouth.net or call 251-622-0151.

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.

FULL-TIME MUSIC MINISTER/YOUTH MINISTER: Evergreen Baptist Church is seeking a full-time music

minister/youth minister. This is a big job but with God's help and great support workers, it will be a blessing. Please send resumés to: Evergreen Baptist Church, 107 Park Street, Evergreen, AL 36401, or ebcsecretary.sarah@gmail.com.

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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Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

On a scale of puny to healthy

Think all that is good related to Thanksgiving and know that is where I am, breathing in the warmth of family, good food and a slower pace.

And while this week's column isn't really holiday related, the topic did spark a funny memory from Thanksgivings past — the “healthy” versus “puny” grandmother test.

Once I left for college I only saw my grandmothers at holidays and on special occasions and of course they both were quick to assess the weight situation the minute they saw me.

I remember one Thanksgiving when Grandma Davis told me she was going to tie rocks to me because she was afraid I was going to blow away. And Granny McCaig rated me as “puny” once or twice. Admittedly these were the grandmother evaluations I preferred.

However, the more consistent assessment from both grandmothers was “healthy” — not what I wanted to hear but always honest and accurate.

It's never easy to have our less than successful areas pointed out but it does provide an opportunity to improve.

Still we all handle critiques differently. Some welcome feedback and soak up every word tossed their way. Others dare you to say one thing that indicates they aren't perfect. Many people fall somewhere in the middle with a healthy or semi-healthy view and application of constructive criticism.

The Alabama Baptist editorial staff and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions communications staff are currently working together to broaden the evaluation process for work done among Baptist communicators.

The rating scale ranges from “needs improvement” to “excellent” with “good” falling in the middle. Someone receiving a ranking of “good” on this scale means they performed at an acceptable level. Their product or project was adequate.

I'm sure you can guess by now that I'm not happy if my rankings aren't tipping the

scale off the right side. Not only do I want the “excellent” rating, but I also want a note indicating that my effort was beyond the scale.

Of course, I can't achieve this in every area but it is still hard for me to receive an evaluation of “good” much less anything less than “good” — at least in the areas that are officially rated.

What about the parts of life that flow along rarely evaluated? Our time with the Lord, having clear minds during our time with the Lord, the amount of sleep we get, our stressed-induced appetites that keep us from being truly healthy, our quality of life in general.

And what about our knowledge level of areas in which we should be informed?

A work colleague recently described how most people 45 and younger listen to or read news headlines only to be able to stay afloat in conversations they may find themselves in. He said they (we) really aren't interested in understanding the full story or knowing all the details, they (we) merely want to know enough of the main points to contribute to the conversation.

That made me think of the latest election and how much time I spent researching the candidates and amendments on the ballot. I did some reading and research, but I certainly didn't have a thorough understanding of the full ballot when I walked in to cast my vote. But sadly I was ahead of so many others my age who didn't even slow down long enough to vote, much less register to vote.

And if this is how we are living life in general, what keeps us from skimming the surface of God's word in the same way? Are we living on past encounters with the Lord rather than experiencing fresh ones every day? Are we consistently seeking Him at deeper levels?

My grandmothers would likely both agree my evaluation in spiritual disciplines would be “puny” and this time “puny” is not the desired ranking. ❏

Rashional Extras...

Follow me on
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Are you guilty of 'I'dolatry'?

By Barry Cosper, D.Min.
Director of missions
Bessemer Baptist Association

As Christians we have great blessings in knowing that we are consecrated in the life of Christ. To live a life of holiness is to reveal to the world that Jesus is real and that He is all the Bible teaches He is. A life of holiness reveals that we have been truly changed and gloriously saved and transformed by God's mighty grace.

However, if our loyalty to Jesus is divided then we become spiritually and emotionally drained. It places us into a miserable state of existence. Many Christians are not happy but this is a total contradiction of terms for the people of God. Happiness has been defined as “a frame of mind in which someone is going somewhere whole heartedly.” Whole heartedly means Christians know where they are going, are not divided in their loyalty and have made up their minds they are going to be loyal and faithful to

God for all of their lives.

Of all the things Christians should fear, complacency ought to head the list. Christians do not know everything but we know enough to act in obedience to God.

The exhortation found in Luke 11:9 is followed by the absolute promise that everyone who asks will receive and everyone who seeks will find and everyone who knocks on the door of knowing God will find that door open to them. If your personal pursuit of God is not working in this way you have two choices. You can question the integrity of the One who made these promises, or you can consider the possibility that your pursuit of God may be flawed.

Are you totally yielded to Jesus or are you guilty of “I'dolatry”? Are you allowing yourself to be ruled by the Three Musketeers of “Me, Myself and I” or is your will lined up with God's will until God calls you home?

A Leader's Character

“No matter the organization, character is the most important attribute of its leader ... even more ... than talent or competence.

“This is true because leadership necessarily involves power and as Lord Acton noted, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Power without character is a curse not a blessing. ... Only when combined with strong character in a leader can power be converted into creative enterprise. ...

“In leadership terms, we need to recognize a difference between authority and power. We can define authority as the ability to lead someone to willing participation. ...

“People follow a leader with authority because they respect both him and his program. Such leaders persuade their followers that the desired course of action makes sense. Power on the other hand is the use of raw force to coerce someone into following.”

Drayton Nabers Jr.
“The Case For
Character: Looking at
Character From a
Biblical Perspective”

“How are we going to make disciples if we don't love people?”

“How are we going to love people if we don't love God supremely?”

“How are we going to love God supremely if we don't follow Him?”

Tim Cox
Pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea

“If you value others and their ministry, then they will value you. People respond positively to clarity.”

Andrew Westmoreland
President, Samford University

@RickWarren

The first job of leadership is to love people. Leadership without love is manipulation.

Theology not as scary as it sounds

Theology is the discipline where theologians take the Word of God and translate it into contemporary practice and language. Theology is always interpretation, it's always an attempt to foster worship and discipleship within the church.

Theology is, therefore, a servant of the church first and foremost.

Theology should always have love as its guiding principle.

Love for God and for our neighbor is what drives us to do theology. If we really love someone we get to know them, we try to know them better each day.

There's not a day that goes by that I don't learn something new about my wife. I love her with everything I am so I'm always trying to get to know her better.

It's the same with God. If we truly love God we should constantly be trying to understand him better, to know him more intimately.

Theology does not just belong to theologians. It belongs to everyone. Every Christian should be doing theology, they should be seeking to understand the message of God more clearly.

Timothy Dwight Davis
Master of divinity student
Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham

Tell me about your goals and plans for 2015 as related to finding more time to spend with God and developing your relationship with Him.

'Be a Blessing'

Alabama Baptists bless others with dollar bill

During the 2014 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, *The Alabama Baptist* handed out dollar bills at its display booth at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Nov. 11-12. Messengers were challenged to "Be a Blessing" — to take a dollar and touch a life. Below are personal stories of how the dollars were used to bless someone's life. Share your story with us. Email pr@thealabamabaptist.org.

A lady in our church told me she lost her job earlier in the day. I'd known she was unhappy and was looking for another job but the termination was a shock. I reached in my pocket and gave her the dollar envelope. I told her I would pray for her and would be her advocate in the job search, listening for opportunities and willing to make calls or write letters. The dollar-blessing envelope was a good entry for the larger discussion we had and my promise to be her friend."

Michael J. Brooks

I put the dollar with some other funds and gave it to Team Noel,

a missions group from our church (Shades Crest Baptist) which will travel to Diriamba, Nicaragua, Dec. 1-6 and partner with Nicaraguan Christian Outreach to share the love of Christ with the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. They will deliver Christmas gifts to children. Thank you for blessing a child."

Clella Lee

My dollar went to the Luyando feeding program in Zambia, Africa, to battle childhood poverty."

Donald H. Jones Jr.

I stopped at a drive thru and made an order. I drove to the window and gave the person taking the order the dollar bill in the name of Alabama Baptists and for being so nice while taking the order. She did not know if she should take it or not but the supervisor told her it was OK. I told her to keep being so nice when people order. She thanked me and accepted it."

Bill McDonald

My brother brought a mentally challenged young man whose father is sick in the hospital home for dinner while my

twin girls were there and KayLee picked up on the fact that he didn't have money for food.

When I told them about their dollars she immediately wanted to give hers to him. My girls are also all about earning a buck. They had just recently come up with the idea to start a leaf raking business for the neighborhood. They made up business cards and everything.

My aunt and uncle had hired them to rake leaves for one hour at \$5 each. KayLee decided she would let the young man have her business also and gave him the 'Be a Blessing' dollar to get him started.

Karalina is giving her 'Be a Blessing' dollar to a young man who attends Ider High School. He is a senior this year and has been diagnosed with cancer.

A lot of the high school students have been doing fundraising but the younger kids wanted to get in on the action. The third grade started taking up donations and came up with \$20 the first day. The high school robotics team decided to let the third grade in on their fundraiser so they are letting the third grade sell bracelets with them."

Jenny Mann ☪



Pope Francis speaks about evolution, creation

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis recently waded into the debate over the origins of human life, saying the big bang theory did not contradict the role of a divine creator but required it.

"When we read about creation in Genesis we run the risk of imagining God was a magician with a magic wand able to do everything. But that is not so," he said. "He created human beings and let them develop according to the internal laws that He gave to each one so they would reach their fulfillment."

Francis said the beginning of the world was not "a work of chaos" but created from a principle of love. He said sometimes competing beliefs in creation and evolution could co-exist.

"God is not a divine being or a magician but the Creator who brought everything to life," the pope said. "Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve."

Catholic teaching traditionally has not been at odds with evolution. In 1950 Pope Pius XII said there was no opposition between evolution and Catholic doctrine. In 1996 St. John Paul II endorsed Pius' statement. ☪

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Photo by Debbie Campbell

DOM officers elected

New officers were elected Nov. 10 for 2015 during the associational directors of missions meeting in Birmingham. They are Ken May (center), Montgomery Baptist Association, president; Otis Corbitt (left), Covington Baptist Association, vice president; and Jim Jackson, Elmore Baptist Association, secretary-treasurer. (TAB)

IMB missionaries minister to voodoo believers in Dominican Republic

Lily was scared for her life but she didn't know why. It should have been a happy time, a momentous occasion. The 25-year-old had been invited by her best friend to be inducted into a position of honor in their religion.

The initiation ritual was a rare opportunity but the very thought of it pierced Lily with dread and fear. She tossed and turned the night before the ritual, unable to pinpoint the source of an overwhelming foreboding. She couldn't shake the sense that what was being offered wasn't real or true.

"If there is a true God please protect me," she thought before falling asleep.

In her dreams Lily pictured her-

self being offered as the sacrifice in the ritual, her life taken away if she went any deeper into this religion.

She spent the following day contemplating that dream instead of attending the ritual. That marked the end of Lily's participation in Santeria, whose practices are similar to voodoo.

Lily didn't experience the Latin American sect in her native country. The Colombian-born American became involved while living in Miami.

God at work

Since becoming a Christian, Lily Llambes has experienced the true God at work. This has been especially true since she and her husband, Carlos, became International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries.

The Llambes are among some 90 Southern Baptist Hispanics who are serving with the IMB, but more Hispanic Baptist missionaries are needed. For more information, visit going.imb.org/2to3yr/kairos.asp or hispanos.imb.org/kairos. (BP)

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

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



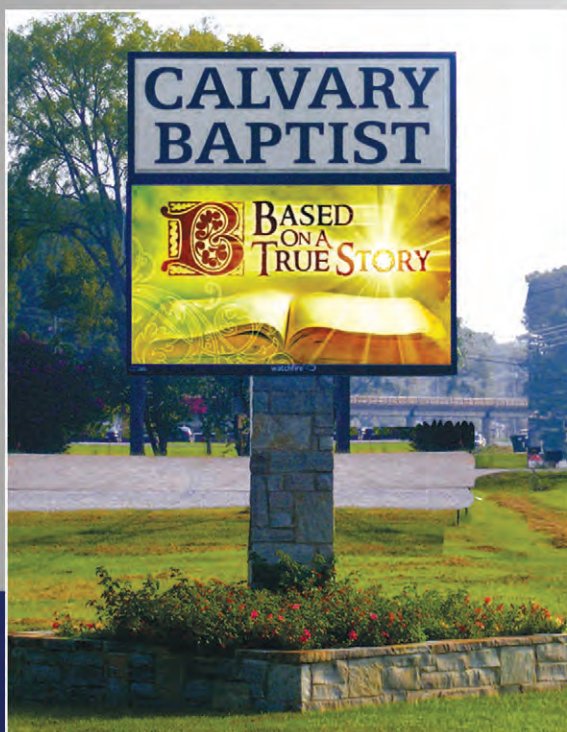
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 30

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

LIVE OUT THE FAITH Hebrews 13:1-8

Show Hospitality (1-3)

Christian love is the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others. It shows special regard for the needs of fellow believers without concern for their social or racial position. The fact the writer of Hebrews urged his readers to keep on loving each other suggests some of them may have neglected this responsibility. Showing brotherly love demanded treating fellow believers as esteemed family members.

One practical demonstration of love involves meeting the needs of Christian workers on the move. The virtue of hosting and caring for visitors was especially valued in antiquity since travel was difficult and inns could be dangerous. Demonstrating hospitality in the home provided an important basis for friendship. The practice of hospitality was a quality required in pastors (1 Tim. 3:2).

A reference to Genesis 18-19 encourages the display of hospitality. Abraham entertained mysterious strangers who were in reality angels. The principle here teaches us that it is better to treat needy guests as messengers from God than to risk offending them by an inhospitable act.

Verse 3 changes the focus to those imprisoned and abused for their faith. Imprisoned believers could easily be forgotten and neglected. We need to identify and help those imprisoned and mistreated for their Christian commitment. Such help could involve providing food and warm clothing and making personal visits of encouragement.

Respect Marriage (4)

Both Jewish and pagan marriages in the New Testament period were characterized by laxity and immorality. Christians have a different approach to marriage. Purity, contentment and a trust in God are ingredients needed for developing healthy marriages and strong homes.

This verse highlights two important truths about marriage. First marriage is to be hon-

ored by all. Even among believers today the stability of marriage faces strong challenges. Christians must honor marriage as a divine institution and as right and good in its practice. Second those who are married must maintain moral purity. The fact that God will judge sexual promiscuity provides motivation for a holy lifestyle among believers.

Security in God (5-6)

Materialism is another threat to family stability. Christians are to renounce the love of money. Do not make the possession of money an end in itself. Christians also are to be content with what they have. Knowing the Lord will not forsake us gives us the stability to enjoy what He gives.

Another threat to family life is anxiety. Encouraging words from Psalm 118:6-7 remind us that God's presence in life alleviates anxiety about personal needs. This is the only New Testament verse describing God as a helper. With God's presence no event in life can shake believers from their foundation. Anxiety about life's needs or challenges has no place in the heart of the believer who trusts the Lord is his Helper.

Imitate Proven Leaders (7-8)

The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers to imitate the faith of their spiritual leaders and avoid unchristian doctrines. Hebrews 13 contains three references to leaders of churches (vv. 7, 17, 24). The reference in verse 7 appears to be to leaders who had completed their service in a congregation and had died. The readers were to reflect on both the words and deeds of these former leaders and imitate their faith.

Former leaders have died but Jesus Christ remains the same. The constancy of Jesus enables us to follow the faith of great Christian leaders. Christ's work of yesterday was to die on the cross for our sins. His work of today is to serve as our High Priest. His future work is to return and conclude God's saving purposes. Jesus never needs to be replaced and His work needs nothing added to maintain its perfection. 📖

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

MINISTRY IN THE FACE OF MENTAL ILLNESS 2 Corinthians 1:2-7

During his missions work Paul endured being stoned, beaten, flogged, shipwrecked, snake-bitten and left for dead numerous times. He also struggled with internal issues of depression and despair. In this epistle he confesses to having even despaired of life itself (1 Cor. 1:8). But Paul never gave in and part of what kept him going was the comfort of fellow Christ-followers. In this passage Paul describes the comfort Christ gives us that we can, in turn, offer to others who are in crisis.

God is the source of comfort. (2-3)

Paul employs the word "comfort" nine times in verses 3-7 and 29 times in the letter. The concept of comfort in Scripture has more to do with strengthening than soothing. It does not relieve our pain so much as stiffen our resolve. Some render the literal word in the Greek as "to help by giving courage." The English word comes from the Latin root "fortis," from where we get words like "forte," "fortress" and "fortitude." According to Scripture it is not about feeling better so much as about feeling stronger.

Paul's use of "we" and "us" throughout this passage invites the Corinthians to picture themselves in solidarity with Paul before their compassionate God, whose comfort meets them in every distress. Also worth noting is the close connection between the Greek word for "comfort" and the Greek word for "Holy Spirit." The latter means literally "one who comes alongside." What an assuring image for us to recall when crisis comes our way. As we walk through the valleys of life the Comforter is walking alongside us.

We are called to be channels of God's comfort. (4-5)

Paul does not focus on his individual troubles but includes the Corinthians in the sufferings of the church at large. A key

phrase to the passage is "so that." We are comforted (strengthened) by God so that we can comfort (strengthen) others. John Henry Jowett once remarked, "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters."

Paul uses the example of Jesus Himself to illustrate that no one is exempt from suffering. Verse 5 notes that "the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives." From the beginning of His life Jesus was lonely and rejected, a victim of criticism and acquainted with grief. If Jesus was perfect and He suffered, then how can we expect to be exempt? God had one Son without sin but He had no sons without suffering.

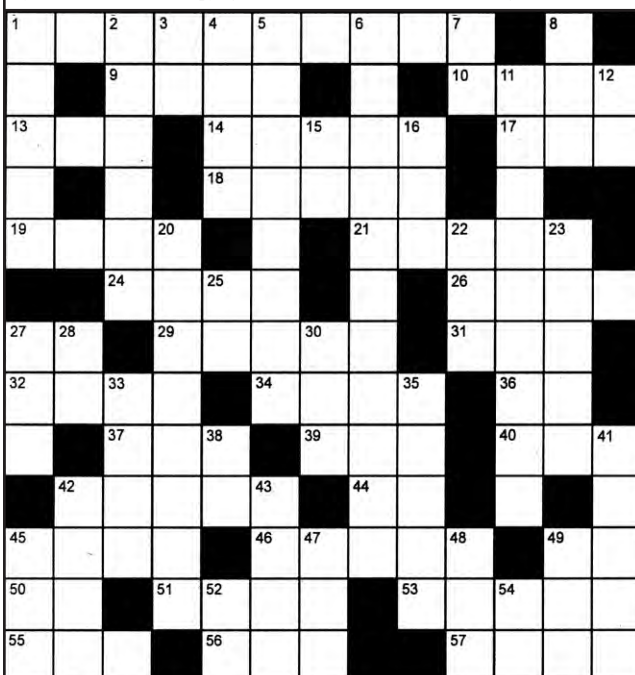
Paul assures the Corinthians that Christ's comfort is stronger than their sufferings. The word "overflow" or "abundance" appears seven times in this letter. Paul is asserting Christ's comfort abounds more than earthly suffering. Just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives Paul declares, "so also through Christ our comfort overflows." In Romans 5:20 Paul points out that because of Jesus where sin abounds grace abounds all the more. In 2 Corinthians we receive another encouraging word: where suffering abounds, comfort abounds all the more.

We can use our difficulties to comfort others. (6-7)

In verse 7 Paul reminds the Corinthians there is always the possibility the situation can be reversed: Members of the church might go through difficulties and receive God's comfort so that they can comfort others. "Patient endurance" is an evidence of faith. If we become bitter or rebellious our trials can work against us instead of for us. Part of the challenge is for us to get beyond ourselves and see the needs of others who are suffering. Thus we need to overcome a key temptation: When we are suffering and focusing on ourselves, we become cisterns instead of channels. As faithful followers we can be channels of grace and comfort. Because God has encouraged us we can encourage others. 📖

Christian Crossword

By Faith Wade Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Last book of the Bible.
- A thing offered unto an _____. (1 Cor. 8:7)
- Boaz and Ruth's son. (Ruth 4:21)
- Cozbi, daughter of _____. (Num. 25:15)
- Alpha and _____. (Rev. 1:8)
- _____ and drink. (Acts 10:41)
- _____ and Dimonah, and Adadah. (Josh. 15:22)
- Sendeth _____ on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
- A tenth part of the _____. (Num. 18:26)
- _____ found grace. (Gen. 6:8)
- The province of _____. (Dan. 8:2)
- Dad.
- _____ himself in water. (Num. 19:19)
- Cast the _____. (John 21:6)
- Who Cain murdered. (Gen. 4:8)
- Linen _____. (1 Kings 10:28)

- Not a she.
- _____ there be light. (Gen. 1:3)
- _____ them about thy neck. (Prov. 6:21)
- The beginning and the _____. (Rev. 22:13)
- _____ Peter.
- Symbol for nickel.
- Papa and _____. (Matt. 2:19)
- Opposite of "out."
- _____ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
- Exalt His _____ together. (Ps. 34:3)
- Shut the _____ mouths. (Dan. 6:22)
- The number of lepers Jesus healed. (Luke 17:17)
- What Gideon was checking for. (Judg. 6:37)
- Children's teeth are set on _____. (Ezek. 18:2)
- head. (Judg. 16:17)
- Mary was one. (Luke 1:27)
- Edward's nickname.
- God hates a proud _____. (Prov. 6:16-17)
- Under the shadow of the _____. (Ps. 91:1)
- The feast of _____. (Ex. 34:22)
- Negative.
- Meadow.
- Where Jesus was born.
- Deuteronomy. (abbr.)
- Printer's measure.
- _____ the son of Abdiel. (1 Chron. 5:15)
- Jesus healed his son. (John 4:46)
- The _____ Commandments.
- Hast thou _____ of the tree? (Gen. 3:11)
- Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)
- Frying _____. (Lev. 7:9)
- Jewish month.
- Head covering.
- They removed from _____. (Num. 33:10)

Down

- One of these never touched Samson's

- North side of Bethemek, and _____. (Josh. 19:27)
- Go ye in _____ all the world. (Mark 16:15)
- He saw _____ smoke rising. (Gen. 19:28)
- Identical.
- I will praise thy _____. (Ps. 54:6)
- Welcome _____. (Titus 1:2)
- God, that cannot _____. (Titus 1:2)
- Suffix.
- Newspaper.
- Doctor of optometry. (abbr.)



TOP 5

most popular songs

CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



1. He Knows My Name

By Francesca Battistelli
(If We're Honest)

2. More Of You

By Colton Dixon
(Anchor)

3. Greater

By MercyMe
(Welcome to the New)

4. No Man Is An Island

By Tenth Avenue North
(Cathedrals)

5. The One I'm Running To

By 7venth Time Down
(Just Say Jesus)

Source: TopChristianHits.org at press time

Movie review

By Martine Sharp, *The Alabama Baptist*Max Lucado's
The Christmas Candle

EchoLight Studios

Did the fact that the title of this movie started with “Max Lucado” grab you? It did me. In fact that is why I chose it to review. I figured it would be a good movie. It turned out to be a great movie!

Of course, I'm a sucker for Christmas movies anyway and may be a trifle prejudiced. My husband, Rick, is not. He usually goes upstairs to play his guitar when I start watching one. When I started watching “The Christmas Candle,” he stood up and started to leave the room. Ten minutes later he was still standing there. Fifteen minutes later I suggested (with a little smirk) that he might be more comfortable sitting down to watch the movie. He did. It was that good.

The movie, set in 1890 England, is the story of a legend that says every 25 years an angel visits the candlemaker in the village of Gladbury and touches one of his candles. Whoever lights the candle on Christmas Eve receives a miracle. Of course many people in the village are desperate for a miracle.

The characters are beautifully presented and the story unfolds with unexpected twists and turns. I won't give away the details but at the end one is left with a picture of what can happen when we love God and our fellow man. ☪



Media reviews

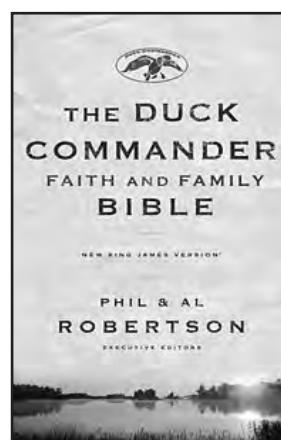
The Duck Commander
Faith and Family Bible

Phil & Al Robertson, Editors. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014. 1216 pp. (Hardback).

I like to include a gift suggestion in my Christmas reviews. This year's choice is a Bible edited by Duck Dynasty's Phil and Al Robertson that was released in October. In the interest of full disclosure I need to confess I have never watched a single episode of Duck Dynasty. That's not because I have anything against the program; I just don't watch television. How can I, with all of these books to read and review?

“The Duck Commander Faith and Family Bible” is a New King James version with articles written by Phil and Al Robertson. There are 30 Life Changers articles — testimonials about lives that have been changed — and 125 Set Your Sights articles based on the most-searched topics in Bible Gateway. Each Set Your Sights article includes scripture references for further study. The articles are well-written, inspiring and engaging.

With a topical index, reading plans and an online Bible study offered by Thomas Nelson, the Bible is a serious study tool that would probably be appealing to Duck Dynasty fans. Or nonfans.



The Christmas Cat

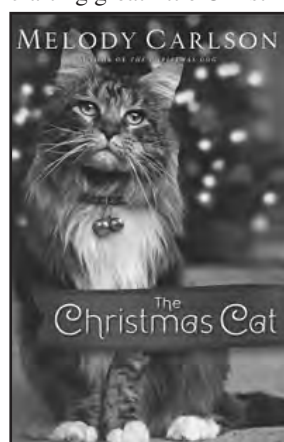
Melody Carlson. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2014. 169 pp. (Hardback).

Another year, another Melody Carlson Christmas book. Yay! Carlson has developed a knack for crafting great little Christmas stories of the kind I like: low-level drama, Christian themes and happy endings — with just enough complications to keep the reader entertained.

This book features a male main character. I'm not sure whether Carlson is trying to market to another segment or just wanted to try something new, but my two reactions to having a male protagonist are 1) it works and 2) the book still seems

pretty chicklit-ish to me. Sorry, guys!

The story is a good one: a man who served as a missionary for the last nine years returns to the states



just as his grandmother dies, leaving him a house and six cats — and he is allergic to cats. Her will requires him to find good homes for the cats and he can't wait to parcel them out, sell the house and start the new job that is waiting for him.

You can probably guess how the book ends but some of the in-between may surprise you. Even if it doesn't, it's a nice story. Just right for the Christmas season.

The Expected One:
Anticipating All of Jesus
in the Advent

Scott James. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014. 73 pp. (Small Hardback).

Looking for a devotional book for your family to use during the Christmas season? You might like “The Expected One” by Scott James, who is described by David Platt in his foreword as “one of the pastors in our church” at Brook Hills.

The little book contains 25 devotions, all based on Old Testament scriptures predicting the coming Messiah. The devotions seem to be best suited for families with children. They are very short and the author includes suggestions for using the material with children. Most of the questions he includes appear to be targeting school-age children.

When my daughter-in-law, a mother of four young children, saw the book she wanted to take it home with her. I promised she could have it as soon as I wrote the review. Paula — it's yours now. Enjoy sharing the promise fulfilled at Christmas with my grandchildren. ☪

Meet the
reviewer

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MS photo

Pakistanis protest against blasphemy laws and violence against Christians.

'She was not guilty'

Woman slain in Pakistan innocent of blasphemy, police say

Police in Pakistan say a Christian couple tortured and slain in early November over accusations the wife desecrated the Quran were innocent. Relatives claim politicians are trying to shield the killers from justice.

Urged to act from mosque loudspeakers a frenzied mob Nov. 4 tore the clothes off Shama, 28, and Shahzad, 32, Masih, struck them, broke their legs, dragged them behind a tractor and threw them into the burning furnace of a brick kiln.

"She was not guilty of blasphemy," said Kasur District Police Capt. Jawad Qamar.

On Nov. 2 Shama Masih was cleaning her quarters in Chak 59 village near Kot Radha Kishan, Karur District, about 37 miles southwest of Lahore, when she found amulets of her late father-in-law, who had used them in the practice of black magic. The amulets may have contained Quran verses and a Muslim co-worker, Muhammad Irfan, noticed the half-burnt papers and accused the family of desecrating the Quran, relatives said. But she was illiterate and could not have known even if Quranic verses were among debris she had burned.

Under Pakistan's widely condemned blasphemy statutes intent must be shown for a conviction of desecrating the Quran.

Bribes offered

At a press conference in Islamabad on Nov. 16 family members said Islamists have offered them land and money as compensation for the murders in an attempt to stop them from prosecuting.

Relatives of the couple said influential Muslims of the area including a Punjab Province lawmaker were issuing threats in an attempt to force them to reach an agreement with the killers. Shahzad Masih's brother, Shahbaz Masih, and his wife, Parveen Masih, demanded the government provide them with protection, saying they had already informed the Kasur District police officer of the threats.

They also demanded the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the mob violence, adding that non-Muslim representatives should be included in the team.

Among other demands the Masih family called for the commission and a Joint Investigation Team to make its reports publicly available immediately after completion. Shahbaz Masih also urged the Supreme Court to order an independent inquiry into the attack.

Further concerns

The family's concerns come amid reports the provincial lawmaker of the area, Muhammad Anees Qureshi, was present at the crime scene when the throng of hundreds tortured and killed Shama and Shahzad.

Family sources said Qureshi, a member of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government, also was making efforts to shield the primary suspect, Riaz Kamboh, from justice. Kamboh is accused of throwing the couple into the furnace after pouring tractor diesel on their bodies.

"Qureshi arrived on the spot just when the lynchers had tortured the couple unconscious," said a relative who asked to remain unnamed for security reasons. "They were not hurled into the furnace till then."

Contrary to published reports Qamar said police have arrested 43 of some 60 named suspects, 39 of whom were in jail, while four were to be produced in an anti-terrorism court on completion of their police remand.

Tahir Ashrafi, a member of the Council of Islamic Ideology, Pakistan's top religious body, held police responsible for failing to act to protect the couple before the mob violence occurred.

"All culprits must be arrested and punished, including the cleric [who made the blasphemy accusation in a mosque] if he's involved," he said.

The Masihis are survived by four children, the oldest is seven. Shama also was five months pregnant. (MS)

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



Faith leaders push for lower payday loan rates

WASHINGTON — Dozens of faith leaders and consumer advocates are pressing Congress to create a national interest rate cap for payday lenders instead of the exorbitant three-digit rates currently charged to people in several states.

Eighty activists from 22 states came to Washington in hopes of shaping new regulations that are expected from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Many of their congregations are surrounded by payday loan businesses they say prey on poor residents by charging high interest rates and creating a cycle of debt. The leaders asked members of Congress on Nov. 19 to pass legislation capping interest rates, citing a 36 percent interest cap required by the Military Lending Act.

The Community Financial Services Association of America, which represents payday lenders, rejects charges of preying on poor and minority communities, saying payday lenders "provide services to a broad cross section of Americans because there is widespread demand." They say "payday advance customers are typical hardworking adults who may not have savings or disposable income to use as a safety net when unexpected expenses occur."

In October the National Association of Evangelicals issued a statement calling on payday lenders to offer products that "do not exploit poor and vulnerable borrowers" and urged the CFPB to investigate abuses.

Alabama Baptists passed a resolution at the Nov. 10-11 state convention annual meeting urging Alabama lawmakers to regulate the business in Alabama. To read the resolution, visit abscannual-meeting.org/resolutions/2014-resolutions/.

Schaefer wins final reinstatement with Methodists

LEBANON, Pa. — Seven years after officiating at the wedding of his gay son, Frank Schaefer has been reinstated as a clergyman in the United Methodist Church (UMC).

The denomination's top court upheld a June decision to reinstate Schaefer's ministerial credentials after a trial court defrocked the Pennsylvania pastor in 2013.

Schaefer appealed and was reinstated by a vote of a regional court, the Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals. At that time Schaefer said, "I will not refuse ministry to anyone. I will never be silent again. I will always speak for my LGBT brothers and sisters."

In the ruling released Oct. 27 the church's top court upheld Schaefer's appeal while acknowledging "some within the church do not support this outcome today," according to United Methodist News Service.

Others are celebrating. The Reconciling Ministries Network executive director Matt Berryman said in a press release it was "a step on the journey toward justice" for a church that "still has a long way to go."

Schaefer, former pastor of Zion United Methodist Church, Iona, Lebanon, Pa., has since moved to the UMC's California-Pacific Conference and ministers in Santa Barbara.

More Americans exploring, sharing faith online

WASHINGTON — A Pew Research study released in mid-November found that one out of every five Americans share their faith online on a weekly basis.

It seems like a lot more than that to Chris Canary, a minister at First Baptist Church, Norman, Okla. "Being in the Bible belt it seems like there's at least a few times a day that someone puts something about their faith on Facebook," said Canary, 27, the interim contemporary worship minister at the church.

Americans are increasingly finding social media to be a — if not the — place to tell their friends and the world about their spiritual beliefs, the Pew study found.

It reported that 20 percent of Americans said they shared their faith on social networking websites or apps, including Facebook and Twitter, in the previous week. Nearly 50 percent said they had seen others doing so.

Those figures, Pew reported, nearly rival the numbers of Americans (23 percent) who say they watch religious television programs. However, they still trail the 40 percent who said they shared their faith "offline, in a real-life setting." ☞