



INSIDE



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# Be prepared

## Travel risks prompt Baptists to improve security, crisis management training

**R**eggie Quimby thought he and his fellow missions team members were safe.

In the company of local guides and a caravan of vehicles they traveled at night on a rural road in Guatemala. While there was some risk involved with this particular road after sunset, Quimby believed the odds of something bad happening were too small.

However, a group of bandits with AK-47s blocked their path with rocks, forced them to pull over and robbed them. No one was harmed that night several years ago. But Quimby, global missions director for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), was reminded that a crime can happen when it's least expected.

"People get comfortable and let their guard down," he said. "We had been there. We had traveled on these roads. [We thought] if we traveled together that risk would go away. Well obviously it did not."

The SBOM and other Baptist organizations are continuing to assess the growing risks involved with overseas travel.

Many of them have turned to an organization based in Pinehurst, Idaho, called Fort Sherman Academy. Its president, David Dose, is a former Department of Defense consultant and instructor who has helped train government, corporate and faith-based groups how to handle travel risks for the past 17 years. The group is one of the largest — if not the largest — providers in the United States of travel security courses, crime

survival training and crisis management.

Dose and his team have interviewed numerous survivors of overseas crime looking for ways these situations could have been avoided. Among those survivors is Gracia Burnham. She and her husband Martin, who were missionaries to the Philippines, were taken hostage by Muslim extremists in 2001 and held in captivity for more than a year before Gracia was rescued. Martin lost his life when he got caught in the crossfire of a gun battle that broke out during the rescue.

### Seeing opportunities

"During my time in this work the Burnham case particularly touched me and I've been privileged to work with Gracia some since," Dose said. "I saw opportunities where probably using existing knowledge we could have helped some people avoid, survive or better survive and encourage folks."

Fort Sherman currently works with about 200 clients. Included in that list is the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, nine Baptist state conventions and numerous churches. The group works with organizations from other denominations as well.

Fort Sherman has a team of about 50 full-time, part-time and contract workers and its headquarters also include a 40-acre guest facility.

Helping better equip faith-based groups for overseas ministry is what motivated Dose and his wife,

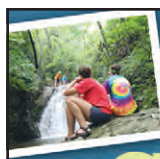
Elizabeth, to start Fort Sherman.

"My wife and I made the decision that probably a lot of missionaries and their families have made — to throw everything in the basket. We started our own company with a major focus on faith-based [groups]. I find enjoyment in that audience. I find purpose in their purpose and so we did like everybody else [with] our finances and future plans and

cashed those things in and started this little organization."

And the "little" organization has grown. Since it began more than 10 years ago Fort Sherman has trained about 42,000 long- and short-term missions workers as well as corporate and humanitarian workers.

Fort Sherman specializes in providing different levels of training — (See 'Upsurge,' page 3)



Coming next week

SPOTLIGHT ON  
**CHRISTIAN CAMPS**



# COMMENT

## ‘That It Might Go Well with You’

He spoke with all the confidence of a new business owner at a grand opening. The future was so clear to him it was as if it had already happened. After all this was a dream — no, a promise — he had been chasing for decades. Now it was about to happen. The promise that had been his inspiration was becoming reality.

“When you have eaten and are satisfied,” Moses said to the Israelites, “praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you” (Deut. 8:10).

“Enjoy the blessings that await you,” Moses told the people he had led for 40 years. They were not to feel guilty that he would not be with them. Their spirits were not to be dampened that others who began the journey toward the promise would not be there either. This was their time. They were to eat and be satisfied.

The bounty they were to enjoy came from God who had given them such “good land.” He is the One who owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10), the One who declares, “The world is Mine and all that is in it” (Ps. 50:12).

Israel would have to work for the promise. They would have to cross the Jordan River. They would have to take Jericho and other cities. It would be hard work demanding determination and commitment. Some would even die in the process but transforming a promise to reality always demands sweat and tears, even today.

### Faithfulness to God

Only by praising God for the good land He had given them would the children of Israel remember to keep God’s commandments, His laws and decrees. For Moses, stewardship of the blessings of God grew out of a relationship with God. Faithfulness to God was never a set of external rules one could check off in order to earn God’s favor.

Moses knew the temptations of the “good life.” After all he had been reared amid the



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

plenty of Pharaoh’s places. He understood the people of his heart were about to experience a total transformation, what sociologists today call upward mobility.

In place of their steady diet of manna and quail they would become accustomed to the milk and honey of the promise land. Their worn out tents would be exchanged for “fine homes.” Instead of the constant wanderings of a nomadic people they would become city dwellers building permanent settlements. No longer would their flocks get the scrubby leftovers for feed. Now their flocks would have the choice grasses and be first in line for water from the wells.

Instead of a poor people living hand-to-mouth Israel would become prosperous and prominent as all they had increased.

How easy to look back at the change in circumstances and become proud, even arrogant; to boast, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me” (Deut. 8:17).

We have seen that process at work with our own eyes. People once faithful to God during all the troubles of want become indifferent to God in times of plenty. Their testimony is not “see what good things the Lord has done.” It is more about their ability, their accomplishments.

Such people do not praise God. They do not keep His commandments, His laws and decrees.

When one does not offer God the sacrifice of praise and worship it is easy for pride and arrogance to flourish. One’s attitude toward material blessings is a reflection of one’s attitude toward God.

Moses offered an antidote to the temptation of pride and arrogance — memory. Beginning in Deuteronomy 8:14 he reminded them that it was God who brought them out of slavery. It was God who delivered them through the waters. It was God who guided them through the trials of the desert. It was God who provided healing from the attacks of deadly snakes and scorpions. It was God who miraculously fed them with manna and gave them water out of hard rock.

### God’s love and care

When the Israelites were unable to help themselves God acted in their behalf “so that in the end it might go well with you” (Deut 8:16). Each act was a reminder that they did not live by the power and the strength of their own hands. Each act was an expression of God’s love and care.

The appropriate response was humility, not arrogance.

For most of us it is impossible to look back at our lives without seeing moments, circumstances or people that altered our lives for the better. Those incidents were not luck or chance or fate. They were God working “so that in the end it might go well with you.”

All who know God through faith in Jesus Christ also can remember, “I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.” And we can remember that salvation is possible only because “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Lest anyone misunderstand what he is saying Moses speaks plainly. In Deuteronomy 5:18 he declares, “But remember the Lord your God for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.” There it is. The theological foundation for wealth. It is God who makes it possible. Therefore the human response is a humble spirit; a spirit that remembers God; that keeps God’s commandments; that exercises stewardship of all God gives as an expression of gratitude.

Stewardship, said Moses, is more than external rules about tithes and offerings. Stewardship is an expression of remembering God’s grace and goodness with a humble and thankful heart.

Like Israel of old those who trust in God continue to dream about the possibilities of life. We continue to pursue those dreams with sweat and tears. We celebrate successes with thankfulness and joy. And we submit the fruits of our labor to God as an expression of gratitude for the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. 🙏

# LETTERS

## TO THE EDITOR

### HONOR AND RESPECT

In response to “Southern Baptists react to grand jury decision” in the Dec. 11 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

I’m 60 years old. I was taught that if confronted with a police officer, if the officer said, “Don’t get out of the car,” I was to not get out of the car. If the officer said, “Stop walking,” I was to stop walking. If the officer said, “Put your hands up,” I was to put my hands up. If the officer said, “Lay down on the ground and put your hands behind your back,” I was

to lie down on the ground and put my hands behind my back. I was taught never to dishonor a police officer by arguing or fighting him or her. My common sense tells me never to fight an officer that is carrying a gun. I don’t believe these problems on the news are about racial problems. It’s about a person fighting a police officer’s orders. Why does this never come out? Do we have to have different rules for each race? That way will never bring racial reconciliation.

Do parents of all races not teach their children that they have to com-

ply with an officer’s orders?

Yeah, what kind of country do we live in?

Honor and respect starts in the home. Honor and respect for persons that have authority over us starts at home. When children, men or women break that rule of life, how can we ignore it? May God lead us to the right way.

J.C.M.  
Brookwood, Ala. 🙏





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

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# 'Upsurge' of interest

## Faith-based groups look to better prepare themselves for dangerous situations

(continued from page 1)

including web-based training — on how to handle various types of crisis situations overseas. It also provides a 24-hour service for clients to call if they need assistance.

Some of those situations may include:

- ▶ What to do if someone on a missions team gets sick overseas, needs immediate medical care and is unable to travel back to the United States.

- ▶ Calling for help if you or a team member is robbed and your wallet and passport have been taken.

- ▶ What to do if an unexpected natural disaster hits the area you're traveling in and derails travel back to the United States for several days.

- ▶ How to handle a team member being detained by an overseas government for several days.

Dose said an "up-surge" of interest is developing among faith-based groups as evangelical groups and organizations send more teams into high-risk areas.

"This is just one more tool to focus on the basics of avoiding crime, surviving crime, being organized in advance for avoiding those things and even having a crisis plan in place if something goes wrong — whether a volcano interrupts travel or somebody stops me at a border," Dose said.

Dose said travelers need to realize finding a "safe place" to travel is becoming increasingly difficult.

### Unexpected challenges

"I'll get the guy who says, 'Oh we don't have a problem. We go to the same place every year,'" said Dose, noting he read a U.S. State Department report showing that crime has increased by nearly 15 percent worldwide. "Yeah but if crime is going up every year and you're doing the same thing you always did, eventually someone might fall victim. We're trying to prep them for that."

And sometimes unexpected challenges can arise before a missions team even arrives at their destination.

As airport authorities continue to crack down on a variety of criminal activity — drug and sex trafficking, terrorism — more missions teams are being detained in airports everywhere, Dose said.

Teams often don't plan ahead for handling

unexpected questions in an airport, he said. Travelers need to be able to better articulate why they are traveling to a country and what they plan to do while they are there.

"They throw out the good old 'I'm just an American tourist' and that doesn't work anymore," he said. "Winging it doesn't help because security has changed."

Dose said those types of mistakes can get expensive if a team member is detained. In some situations organizations can spend anywhere from \$10,000 to more than \$50,000 in fees and legal expenses triggered by issues with overseas governments.

"I've seen up to \$100,000 in a month," Dose said. "That's a lot of money that would have gone to next year's missions trip."

Quimby said stewardship was a major part of the decision for the SBOM to develop an ongoing partnership with Fort Sherman. He described the training they've received in developing crisis management strategies as a way of "protecting ministry, protecting our future ministry and helping our churches to protect their ministry."

"We're seeing that if we do the training and we invest up front, then we may not have to pay those big expenses because we have been trying to do things correctly," he said.

Ken Rhodes, director of missions mobilization for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, said they require missions teams and personnel who work with them to go through at least a basic level of training from Fort Sherman — which can involve an eight-hour course.

"In Mississippi we are really pressing the boundaries to send people to some of the harder places to get to in the world," Rhodes said, noting they have trained about 2,000 people.

In addition to the general risks involved with overseas travel, Rhodes said there also are liability issues to consider. Organizations should be prepared to resolve conflicts that could surface between them and the family members of those involved in an unexpected crisis, he said.

"We send husbands of unbelieving wives,



we send students whose parents are unbelievers and they do not understand what is happening," Rhodes said. "So I think that is a huge liability when you're sending family members who are from families who are not supportive and may not even be believers."

More and more Baptist colleges and universities also are working with Fort Sherman to train students planning to study abroad or participate in missions trips.

Cynthia Jayne, associate provost for intercultural and international studies at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., noted, "We decided that it really didn't matter where students were going. [Students] had the potential to get themselves into really serious difficulties if they didn't understand some of the basic things."

The university sends about 250 to 300 students overseas annually for academic programs and about 200 to 300 overseas for missions projects.

### Crisis management on campus

Jayne said the university continues to push its leadership to be more prepared when working with students overseas.

The training also has helped them prepare to better handle potential crisis situations on campus. In February 2014 a Union University student was charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of another student on its campus in Jackson.

"It raised a lot of other questions for us about preparing our students to deal with many kinds of life situations," Jayne said.

The campus now is working with Fort Sherman to provide online training to freshmen this year, Jayne said.

"Ultimately our goal is to have every student have that basic online training," Jayne said. "You can fence in. You can lock the gates. You can do all of those things but if the students themselves don't understand how to protect themselves, it isn't going to help." (BP)

**For more information  
about Fort Sherman  
and the training they  
provide, contact them  
at 1-888-211-8674 or  
info@fortsherman.org.**

# Church Life

Part 1 of 3 in a series

RELIGIOUS  
AFFILIATION:

none

## Engaging 'nones' is challenging but possible, American church leaders say

**A**merican "nones" — people who claim no religious affiliation — come with a variety of stories.

Some were raised without any religious education at all. Most of them have few opinions on faith and wouldn't know the Bible from the Bhagavad Gita.

And then there are those who, like Eric Walker, grew up in a Christian environment only to reject it in adulthood.

"I was, like most southern children, raised in church ... primarily Baptist," said Walker, a 27-year-old Knoxville, Tenn., native who works for the U.S. government in Germany. "Through middle and high school I attended organizations like Yoke and Young Life."

Walker said he increasingly came to experience church as judgmental which led him to question the existence of God and embrace science and reject faith. But he stopped short of saying he's an atheist.

"Do I think there could be a God? Sure the universe is unfathomably huge," Walker said. "I would consider myself spiritual."

Walker represents what a number of recent polls show as a growing body of former or never-before Christians who would choose "none" if asked their religious affiliations on surveys and applications.

### Rising numbers

In 2012, Pew's Religion and Public Life Project published research showing 1 in 5 Americans identify themselves as "nones." And the numbers are rising.

"In the last five years alone the unaffiliated have increased (from) just over 15 percent to just under 20 percent of all U.S. adults," Pew said in the report.

But more recent research suggests the numbers are much larger than previously believed.

The Barna Group recently found close to 40 percent of Americans could be considered "nones."

Whatever the actual percentages the group definitely is on the rise and serving as somewhat of a barometer of the cultural weather patterns with which American religious groups must contend.

And scholars, pastors and congregational consultants are uniform in their assessment that the Church must respond to the social changes prompting the rise in the "nones" while remaining true to its core message.

But Christians should not worry too much — something they might achieve if they remember their church history, said Rob Nash, professor of missions and world religions at Mercer University's

McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta. During at least two periods in American history vast swaths of the populace either rejected the Church or never was part of it to begin with, Nash said. Those periods preceded the First and Second Great Awakenings.

And in both cases Christians responded with authentic expressions of faith which huge numbers of Americans found attractive.

It's very much like the current social and cultural conditions the Church finds itself in today, Nash said.

"You have this cycle where there has been a movement away from church, and the Church is able to rise above the identification of itself with the culture and offer a vision to which people return," he said.

The present downturn is exacerbated by those in the Church who want to hold onto tradition "and refuse to allow the spirit of God to flow into what it wants to." The result is a Church that fails to rise above the whims of the culture and fails to present the gospel in a compelling way, he said.

Everyone has some sort of faith orientation, even those who choose to reject God, said Tennessee minister Eric Minton.

"We've done that so long that we have lost track of what's really going on," he said. "We have to live ... so powerfully that people are intrigued and empowered by the story at work in us."

However, some don't buy into cookie-cutter categories to describe people's religion or lack thereof.

"When you're talking about the 'nones,' that's not a real thing," said Minton, minister of youth and young adults at Monte Vista Baptist Church, Maryville, Tenn.

Why? "Because everybody has some sort of faith orientation," he said. "I think there is a spiritual element to all things — even in atheists making a decision to reject God."

But that doesn't mean the culture isn't secular in viewpoint, Minton added, noting television shows which try to deal with Christianity as a topic often get it completely wrong.

"It's how Christians would talk of people with Muslim backgrounds as always praying or always wearing white," he said.

It's also obvious among some of his

friends in the Pacific Northwest who claim to know Bible stories and characters like Moses.

"But they don't understand what it means to love Jesus and how that changes anything about your existence."

It's part of the reason so many Americans have been disaffected by the Church and subsequently raised generations without any religious involvement at all, Nash said.

Those who have grown up outside the Church have not been exposed to the biblical narratives and values the culture could once draw upon.

"There are huge numbers who fall into that category," Nash said.

And that trend may be truer in some places than others.

Even the most basic Christian knowledge can't be taken for granted, said Connecticut pastor Jason Coker. "It's very true in the Northeast," said Coker, pastor of Wilton Baptist Church in Connecticut.

It's so true, Coker said, that the post-Christian and post-church culture only now arising in the rest of the nation has been fully entrenched in New England.

"There are people who have no idea about Christianity and what it means," he said.

Coker taught a class at a local Catholic college recently. At the end of the semester he asked students to share what they had learned.

"One of the students said, 'I had no idea what those numbers were that you used to call out after you said Matthew. I didn't know what chapter and verse was.'"

### Committed to faith

It reminded Coker of what he already knows about the "nones": "The most basic things you cannot take for granted ... you can't even take chapter and verse for granted."

But there's also good news for churches with the rise of the religiously unaffiliated, Coker added.

One positive is that those who do attend church regularly, at least in the Northeast, tend to be seriously committed to their faith community, he said.

Another is that many of those who don't attend church tend to be genuinely curious about Christianity when they encounter it.

"They don't have any hang ups with it. They don't have any ill will against Christianity," Coker said. "It's a clean slate."

That often leaves the door open to share the faith, he added.

"Since we are dealing with a blank slate we can say, 'This is what we believe about Jesus. This is what is meaningful and purposeful in our lives,'" Coker said.

One of the most powerful tools for attracting "nones" in the Northeast is service, he added. Unchurched people often want to help when the Church is feeding the homeless.

### 'We love our neighbor'

"We tell them we do this because we love God and we love our neighbor," he said.

Ministers elsewhere also are seeing the way the service and fellowship are drawing "nones" into faith communities — though often not to join.

Campus ministers are on the front line of that phenomenon.

David Stone, campus minister with Western North Carolina Baptist Collegiate Ministries, said, "I have this guy who is my age — but in college — who calls me pastor but is not religious. He is agnostic at best but wants to do things with us — cook meals at the shelter, roadside clean-ups and doing good for others."

But the man isn't interested in becoming a Christian, which is a trait he also sees in the younger students he works with at the University of North Carolina-Asheville and Western North Carolina University.

"The traditional college students ... are a second generation removed from the Church," Stone said. "They are not looking for a worship service to fix them, but someone to connect to their story."

Some of the "nones" he encounters have had some exposure to Church — usually a negative experience. Stone often finds himself apologizing for the behavior of other Christians.

"I get to know why they are where they are ... and I have to admit if I had experienced what many of them had experienced I would probably be a 'none' myself," he said.

Stone said he and other college ministers simply accept now that they work in a social environment in which they — and any person of faith — is in the minority.

"Somewhere along the way, faith was not transferred from child to parent and accepted as their own," he said.

For Walker, though faith was taught to him, he certainly didn't accept it.

"I don't think I'll ever go back to organized religion." (BNG)

**"Somewhere along the way, faith was not transferred from child to parent and accepted as their own."**

**David Stone  
campus minister  
Western North Carolina  
Baptist Collegiate Ministries**

# DEALING WITH Mental health issues



123rf.com

## Mental illness real medical condition not failure of willpower, faith or prayer life

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**C**hristian speaker and former “700 Club” co-host Sheila Walsh talks openly about her struggle with major depression, frequently sharing her testimony at conferences. At the end of one of her speaking engagements a woman approached Walsh and showed her a picture of her 25-year-old daughter. The woman shared that her daughter had struggled for years with depression but attended a church that did not believe Christians should take medication.

“My daughter took her own life,” the woman told Walsh, who has called the conversation one of the saddest she has ever had.

Unfortunately the woman’s story is not unusual. Mental illness often is linked to suicide, homelessness and substance abuse. It can lead to violence, family separations and imprisonment. Mental illness strikes more Americans each year than diabetes or cancer yet many of those who suffer from it often suffer alone.

### ‘Societal stigma’

Zelia Baugh, executive director of psychiatric services for Baptist Health System in Birmingham, said, “There is still a societal stigma when you have a mental illness diagnosis. People don’t want to have mental illness or the stigma associated with it so they want to deny it or treat it on their own.”

The stigma of mental illness can be especially strong in churches, Baugh said.

“If you’ve got diabetes, cancer or heart disease everybody’s all about making sure that people are praying for you so you have an instant support system,” Baugh said. “It’s very different when you are talking about mental health issues.”

A recent LifeWay Research survey

found that those who experience mental illness are unlikely to find much help at church (see story, page 7). Two-thirds of Protestant senior pastors reported they seldom speak to their congregation about mental illness. Roughly a quarter of pastors (22 percent) reported they are reluctant to help those who suffer from acute mental illness because it takes too much time, though pastors and churches did express a desire to help those who experience mental illness.

Those good intentions do not always lead to action.

Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, said, “Our research found people who suffer from mental illness often turn to pastors for help. But pastors need more guidance and preparation for dealing with mental health crises. They often don’t have a plan to help individuals or families affected by mental illness and miss opportunities to be the Church.”

### Missing an ‘open forum’

Stetzer said what appears to be missing in most church responses is “an open forum for discussion and intervention that could help remove the stigma associated with mental illness.”

Educating pastors and lay leaders about

mental illness can make a big difference when someone in the church is suffering, said Steve Trader, a licensed professional counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries. Mental illness affects not only

the individual but also the family so a poorly handled response by the Church has the potential to negatively impact multiple generations. It is important that churches are ready to provide love and support, not shame and condemnation, Trader said.

“So many times a person suffering from mental illness will be told they must have secret sin in their lives or that they suffer from a lack of faith but many times this is not the issue at all,” he said. “Other people may say you just have to choose

to be happy but this may be impossible for someone with mental illness.”

To avoid the judgment of others an individual suffering from mental illness may keep silent, which has its own drawbacks. Silence can leave people feeling ashamed about mental illness, said Jared Pingleton, director of counseling services at Focus on the Family. Those with mental illness can feel left out and as if the Church doesn’t care. Or worse they can feel mental illness is a sign of spiritual failure.

**“Pastors need more guidance and preparation for dealing with mental health crises. They often don’t have a plan to help individuals or families affected by mental illness and miss opportunities to be the Church.”**

**Ed Stetzer**  
executive director  
LifeWay Research

Taking medication for mental health issues can be controversial in faith communities as well, Trader said. A pastor or trusted Christian friend may advise against taking doctor-prescribed medications for mental illness, suggesting more prayer or participation in church is the solution.

“Ironically these are the same people that take medication for their high cholesterol, high blood pressure or other physical illness,” Trader said.

These mixed messages can make an individual feel pulled between their faith and their doctor’s advice, leading to a much longer and much harder recovery, Baugh said.

“We have patients who say they aren’t taking their medicine because their pastor told them to pray instead, but each time a patient stops taking medication it becomes harder to come back to what is considered normal for them,” Baugh said.

### Sound medical advice

The challenge is providing sound medical advice to the patient without discounting the patient’s faith or criticizing a trusted pastor or friend, Baugh said.

“We often tell patients that God created man and God created man with the ability to develop these medications in order for patients to heal. But it’s a very delicate balance,” she said.

The medical community and the faith community can learn from each other to better assist individuals and families affected by mental illness but the learning has to go both ways, Baugh said.

“The key is open dialogue and education. Mental illness is a real medical condition not a failure of willpower and not a failure of the individual’s faith and prayer life. The more that ministers and lay leaders can learn about mental illness and its causes, the greater quality of life individuals with mental illness can have.” (BP, BNG contributed)

# Mental health AND THE Church



123rf.com

## Mental health resources

### Education key to helping those with mental illness

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 1 in 4 Americans suffers from some kind of mental illness in any given year. One in 17 lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder. Approximately 20 percent of youth ages 13–18 and 13 percent of youth ages 8–15 experience a severe mental disorder.

A recent LifeWay Research survey found that pastors rarely speak to their congregations about mental illness and fewer than 1 in 7 churches train leaders how to recognize mental illness, according to pastors.

The survey showed that family mem-

bers and those with mental illness overwhelmingly support open discussion of mental health issues in church so the topic will not be a taboo. They also want churches to point families to local resources.

Though a quarter of churches surveyed said they do have a plan in place to assist families affected by mental illness, few family members said they were aware of a plan in their church.

Education is key to helping individuals and families affected by mental illness. The following resources compiled from various sources could be used by pastors and lay leaders to open a discussion about mental health in the Church. (TAB)

**Pathways Professional Counseling** — [www.pathwaysprofessional.org](http://www.pathwaysprofessional.org)  
1-866-991-6864

**Alabama Department of Mental Health** — [mh.alabama.gov/mi/](http://mh.alabama.gov/mi/)  
Provides links to mental health providers throughout the state and county-by-county

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** — [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)  
Support tools and information, including links to local NAMI affiliates

**NAMI FaithNet** — [faithnet.nami.org](http://faithnet.nami.org)  
Faith-based resources including prayer and worship tools

**Mental Health Ministries** — [www.mentalhealthministries.net](http://www.mentalhealthministries.net)  
Provides video clips, bulletin inserts and other resources including faith-based resources for Mental Health Month

**Pathways to Promise** — [www.pathways2promise.org](http://www.pathways2promise.org)

**Pastor care line** — 1-844-PASTOR1  
A partnership effort between the North American Mission Board and Focus on the Family

## Churches can effectively minister to members by taking proactive steps

By Steve Trader, L.P.C., N.C.C.  
Pathways Professional Counseling

Within every church there are people who deal with mental health issues. There are three common ways the Church has traditionally dealt with these individuals — ignore the problem, attribute the problem to spiritual weakness or refer the person to a mental health professional and forget about it.

A better way to help would be for leaders to educate their church members about this very real and difficult issue.

Many church members with a mental health concern will go to a spiritual leader first. Sadly most clergy have had little or no training to help people with these issues. In some cases spiritual leaders will tell people with mental illness that their condition is caused by personal sin, lack of faith or demonic activity. Such a response provides little support for the suffering the person is experiencing.

### Chemical imbalance

While there are times spiritual and mental health are connected, there are many times when mental health issues are actually the result of a chemical imbalance within the brain. If important brain chemicals such as serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine are not produced in the right amounts, then mental illness likely will develop.

When this happens it can be terribly frustrating to be told you are “just not spiritual enough.” The fact is that an individual with mental illness truly cannot help it. I have known many wonderful Christian people who struggle with depressive disorders, anxiety disorders and bipolar issues. These individuals need our love and support, not our condemnation.

Pastors and church leaders can guide a

congregation to minister effectively to those dealing with mental health issues by taking a few proactive steps.

► **Educate.** Invite a speaker or offer a workshop. Use bulletin inserts and newsletters to educate about mental health. May is Mental Health Month and several organizations have bulletin inserts and other free resources churches can use to educate members about mental illness (see resource list, this page).

► **Pray.** Make a commitment as a congregation to pray for people and families that deal with mental illness.

► **Support.** Each church regardless of size should have an easily accessible list of mental health professionals and services available in the area. Such a list is a valuable resource for individuals and families who need mental health referrals.

It is so important that we as the Church address mental health issues well. The sad fact is that many people sitting in our church pews every Sunday are silently struggling with depression, anxiety, mood swings or a number of other thoughts and feelings they do not understand and cannot control.

If the social and spiritual stigma attached to mental illness keeps people from opening up to someone then they may be tempted to engage in destructive behaviors such as drinking alcohol, using illegal drugs or watching pornography to escape the mental and emotional issues they are struggling with. Obviously these are unhealthy ways to cope.

The healthier thing to do is to talk with someone who loves and cares for them. Church leaders and members should be ready to meet these individuals at their point of need.

God wants to use us to help the hurting and hopeless. We must be aware and observant of what is going on in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Through God’s grace we can make a difference. 🙏

## Pastor shares personal experience of dealing with depression

By Ken Sartain  
Pastor, First Baptist Church, Hughson, Calif.

When I was diagnosed with depression I felt as though I finally understood why I felt alone,” said one man, after seeking help through his doctor. “However,” he continued, “I still was afraid of telling anyone in my church about my condition because of the fear of being ostracized, which made my depression even more desperate.”

This story is one that could be told throughout our churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). What makes the story of the young man who was afraid of telling his church about his depression even more alarming is that he is the pastor of the church.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one-quarter of the American population suffers from a form of mental illness every year.

SBC entities are highlighting the importance of mental health ministry in response to a motion at the 2013 annual meeting. The motion also prompted Frank S. Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, to name an advisory group to gather suggestions about ways Southern Baptists can more effectively minister to people with mental health challenges.

Members of the Mental Health Advisory Group (MHAG) include pastors, licensed counselors, health care providers, educators, social workers and a military chaplain. They represent churches, private practices, para-church ministries, state conventions and national SBC entities. Many members of the group have dealt with mental health challenges within their own families in addition to their professional experience.

The intent of the MHAG is to determine what, if anything, is being done in SBC churches to address the stigma of mental health within congregations. This includes the question of mental health-friendly churches — or in other words — is the local church open to someone simply mentioning they have experienced an issue with anxiety or depression recently?

### Mental health survey

The MHAG has set up a survey that asks five questions to determine the extent of the existing ministries that focus on mental health within SBC churches.

The survey can be found at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/83ST2KR](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/83ST2KR).

The survey results will be used to explore innovative ways churches can address this increasingly prevalent issue with an eye toward awareness, not treatment, at the local church level.

If you or someone you know is experiencing issues with mental health there is hope. A recent study revealed that someone with nonsevere mental health issues can mitigate their symptoms by getting engaged with healthy relationships. For every healthy relationship fostered, medication can be lowered by one milligram.

In his book “Outliers,” Malcolm Gladwell tells an interesting story of a group of people who eventually migrate from Italy to upper-Pennsylvania. The story is titled, “The Roseto Mystery.” It deals with why immigrants lived so much healthier lives than those around them. Was it because of genealogy? Environment? It turns out that the reason for virtually zero heart disease in people 55 and younger and a death rate from heart disease half that of the United States as a whole, was this startling fact: the people of Roseto, Pa., enjoyed healthy relationships.

Southern Baptists have the same opportunity in the church to create healthy relationships. Christ calls Christians to be in a healthy relationship with Him and create healthy relationships in our homes and churches. 🙏

# Need for an open forum

## Mental illness remains taboo topic for many pastors

One in 4 Americans suffers from some kind of mental illness in any given year, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Many look to their church for spiritual guidance in times of distress. But they’re unlikely to find much help on Sunday mornings.

Most Protestant senior pastors (66 percent) seldom speak to their congregation about mental illness.

That includes almost half (49 percent) who rarely (39 percent) or never (10 percent) speak about mental illness. About 1 in 6 pastors (16 percent) speak about mental illness once a year. And about a quarter of pastors (22 percent) are reluctant to help those who suffer from acute mental illness because it takes too much time.

### Assisting those affected

Those are among the findings of a recent study of faith and mental illness by Nashville-based LifeWay Research. The study, co-sponsored by Focus on the Family, was designed to help churches better assist those affected by mental illness.

Researchers surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors about how their churches approach mental illness. Researchers then surveyed 355 Protestant Americans diagnosed with an acute mental illness — either moderate or severe depression, bipolar or schizophrenia. Among them were 200 church-goers. A third survey polled 207 Protestant family members of people with acute mental illness.

The study found pastors and churches want to help those who experience mental illness. But those good intentions don’t always lead to action.

“Our research found people who suffer from mental illness often turn to pastors for help,” said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research.

“But pastors need more guidance and preparation for dealing with mental health crises. They often don’t have a plan to help individuals or families affected by mental illness and miss opportunities to be the Church.”

Only a quarter of churches (27 percent) have a plan to assist families af-

ected by mental illness, according to pastors. And only 21 percent of family members are aware of a plan in their church.

Few churches (14 percent) have a counselor skilled in mental illness on staff or train leaders how to recognize mental illness (13 percent), according to pastors.

Two-thirds of pastors (68 percent) say their church maintains a list of local mental health resources for church members. But few families (28 percent) are aware those resources exist.

Family members (65 percent) and those with mental illness, (59 percent) want their church to talk openly about mental illness so the topic will not be a taboo. But 66 percent of pastors speak to their church once a year or less on the subject.

That silence can leave people feeling ashamed about mental illness, said Jared Pingleton, director of counseling services at Focus on the Family. They can experience feelings of alienation from others or failure for not being able to overcome it.

“We can talk about diabetes and Aunt Mable’s lumbago in church — those are seen as medical conditions,” he said. “But mental illness — that’s somehow seen as a lack of faith.”

Most pastors say they know people who have been diagnosed with mental illness. Nearly 6 in 10 (59 percent) have counseled people who were later diagnosed.

And pastors themselves aren’t immune from mental illness. About a quarter of pastors (23 percent) say they’ve experienced some kind of mental illness while 12 percent say they received a diagnosis for a mental health condition.

But those pastors often are reluctant to share their struggles, said Chuck Hannaford, a clinical psychologist and president of HeartLife Professional Soul-Care in Germantown, Tenn.

Hannaford counsels pastors in his

practice and said many — if they have a mental illness like depression or anxiety — won’t share that information with the congregation.

Those with mental illness also can be hesitant to share their diagnosis at church. Michael Lyles, an Atlanta-based psychiatrist, said more than half his patients come from an evangelical Christian background.

“The vast majority of them have not told anybody in their church what they were going through, including their pas-

tors, including small group leaders, everybody,” Lyle said.

Stetzer said what appears to be missing in most church responses is “an open forum for discussion and intervention that could help remove the stigma associated with mental illness.”

Researchers asked those with mental illness about their experience in church.

A few — 10 percent — say they’ve

changed churches because of how a particular church responded to their mental illness. Another 13 percent either stopped attending church (8 percent) or could not find a church (5 percent). Among regular churchgoers with mental illness, about half (52 percent) say they have stayed at the same church. Fifteen percent changed churches while 8 percent stopped going to church and 26 percent said, “Don’t know.” More than half (53 percent) say their church has been supportive.

### Biblical examples

Pingleton pointed out that many biblical characters suffered from emotional struggles. And some, were they alive today, would likely be diagnosed with mental illness.

“The Bible is filled with people who struggled with suicide or were majorly depressed or bipolar,” he said. “David was totally bipolar. Elijah probably was as well. They are not remembered for those things. They are remembered for their faith.” (LifeWay)

**The study, along with a guide for pastors on how to assist those with mental illness and other downloadable resources, is posted at [ThrivingPastor.com/MentalHealth](http://ThrivingPastor.com/MentalHealth).**

## Tips for those who have family, friends with mental illness

It is important for Christians to be loving and approachable when people seek our counsel. Here are a number of positive things we can do when someone struggling with mental illness comes to us for advice:

- ▶ **Listen and validate.** This doesn’t necessarily mean we have a solution. It means the person is being heard.
- ▶ **Encourage the person to seek the**

**help of a professional.** Suggest the possibility of seeing a psychiatrist, psychologist or a licensed professional counselor.

- ▶ **Don’t be scared.** This person has come to you because you have some level of rapport with them. God wants us to help the hopeless.

- ▶ **Don’t tell the person to “suck it up” and learn to live with it.** This is hurtful and painful to hear.

- ▶ **Show them the love of Christ.** Too many times people talk about love but fail to demonstrate it. Remember that love is both a noun and a verb.

- ▶ **Follow up.** This means asking if the person sought help from a professional and if they are following their prescribed treatment plan. (Source: Steve Trader, Pathways Professional Counseling)

# 'Light of the world'

## Steele Baptist builds lighthouse to inspire heart change

By Maggie Walsh  
The Alabama Baptist

Members of Steele Baptist Church had a desire to see residents in their area come to know Jesus but didn't know how to inspire a heart change in the midst of the country church's declining attendance.

So they began with a rebuilding program for the church body itself based on the book of Nehemiah. Looking inward was a move in the right direction, said Glenn Pender, long-term interim pastor of Steele Baptist.

"We first looked at who we were. At this point we saw a need to be reconciled to God so we held a day of reconciliation to God and one another," Pender said.

He said the "renewed spiritual life" from that day stirred change. From worship services to thinking outside the four walls in practical ways, church members turned to Scripture for inspiration.

### Lighting the way

Matthew 5:14 caught their attention. In it Jesus tells believers, "You are the light of the world." Steele members took the illustration and found the solution for inspiring a heart change in the community: build a lighthouse to show people the way back to God.

"In this process we wanted to let our light shine before our town so they might see Jesus and come to know Him as Savior and Lord," said Pender, who also is disaster relief coordinator for St. Clair Baptist Association.

Several members of the church came together to build the working 12-foot lighthouse, including Jeff Layfield, Robert Barnes, Da-



Photo courtesy of Glenn Pender

vid Walker, Greg Walker, Dalton Walker, Terry Wicks and Pender.

Pender said the lighthouse has caught the attention of many in the community and also has had a

positive impact within the church.

"The fellowship of the church has really improved (since building the lighthouse)," he said. "It's such a God thing." 🙏

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## ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

### Mount Vernon's Goforth celebrates 50 years

Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Jasper, honored its minister of congregational care, Edward Goforth, for 50 years of ministry service during a worship service Dec. 14, 2014, which also doubled as a retirement celebration.

Goforth received his education from Samford University in Birmingham and has served primarily in Walker County. Churches



GOFORTH

he served as pastor include Eastmont Baptist Church, Birmingham; First Baptist Church, Parrish; Corinth Baptist Church, Cordova; Blooming Grove Baptist Church; Lynn Baptist Church; Philadelphia Baptist Church, Jasper; and Eastside Baptist Church, Jasper.

Goforth, 79, also served as interim pastor of First Baptist Church, Carbon Hill, and Sonny Home Baptist Church, Haleyville, in addition to being an on-call chaplain for Walker Baptist Medical Center and teaching Bible classes for 20 years to senior citizens at a retirement village, both in Jasper.

John Gates, pastor of Mount Vernon Church, described Goforth as "a faithful man."

"He has had a really positive impact wherever he's been," Gates said. "He's well-respected in this area."

Goforth and his late wife of 34 years, Dorothy, have five children, 15 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. His second wife, Shirley, also is deceased. (Maggie Walsh)

### Atcheson performs at NYC's Carnegie Hall

For the twelfth time Randall Atcheson, son of the late Alabama evangelist Hyman Atcheson, performed Dec. 2, 2014, at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Atcheson became the organist for First Baptist Church, Clanton, at the age of 12. After finishing high school at Chilton County High School in Clanton and attending Samford University in Birmingham, he earned a bachelor's degree and master's degree, both in piano and organ, from The Julliard School of Music in 1971.

For the most recent Carnegie Hall performance Atcheson performed three classical selections — "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman," "Pour le piano" and "Polonaise in A-flat major, Op. 53" — and then 24 Christmas "favorites" like "O Come, All Ye Faithful" after intermission for the 700 participants.

He told the audience his program was to "celebrate the reason for the season — the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Although he travels the world while performing, Atcheson said "sacred music is still my favorite to play and that goes back to my upbringing in Chilton County." (TAB)



ATCHESON

## Ministry Tips



### HOW INVITING ARE YOUR FACILITIES TO GUESTS?

By Doug Rogers

Director of Communications and Technology Services, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

The beginning of a new year is a great time to take a fresh look at your church facilities to see how inviting they are to guests. There are several ways to go about this.

Inspect your church sign to make

sure it is attractive and can be seen clearly by passersby.

Take a few minutes this week to tour your parking lot.

Be sure your worship center is clearly marked from the outside so people know where to enter (and also that your church office is clearly marked for weekday visitors).

Note any hazards in the parking lot or

sidewalks and any unsightly landscaping and take care of those problems promptly.

Consider providing convenient parking for guests and have volunteers with name-tags stationed on Sundays to welcome them and show them in.

Provide a welcome center outside your sanctuary with friendly volunteers who can escort guests to Sunday School or child care.

Make sure there are plenty of directional signs for child care, restrooms and other areas of the church.

Consider inviting a friend, a couple or a family who are not members of your church to come one Sunday and be "undercover visitors." Encourage them to be candid with thoughts about their experience. 🙏



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Songs of Christmas

### Will They See Our Song?

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

For the past four weeks Theology 101 has looked at Songs of Christmas. Known by their Latin titles, these poetic and prophetic passages sprang from the lips of people closely connected with the incarnation of Christ — Mary, His mother; Zecharias, the father of His forerunner; angels that sang to the shepherds; and Simeon, who experienced peace at seeing the infant Jesus. Many of us once again listened to inspiring songs of Christmas in special worship services over recent weeks. More than a few of us likely gave voice to favorite Christmas carols or blended with choirs to celebrate Christ's coming through inspiring musicals.

Thinking about songs we sing brings to mind a rather unusual turn of phrase found in Psalm 40. Subtitled as a song of David, the Psalm is a testimony to the Lord's redeeming work in a life that had become bogged down, feeling itself to be sinking in a miry pit. It tells of the Lord's response to a sinner's cry, a response that exchanged the miry pit for a solid rock. The response of one rescued was to testify how the Lord "put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord" (Ps. 40:3). When we read that verse we want to do a double take. Expecting to read that many will hear the song, we stare at the verse that says many will see that song. We expect songs to be heard not seen.

As all of us live into 2015 we ask ourselves, "Do I have a song of praise to raise to the Lord?" Then we ponder, "What kind of song can we raise that others can see and, as a result of seeing our song, turn to the Lord?" Obviously such a song must be more than one from our lips; it must take its origin

from our lives. People hear words but they see conduct. Beautiful vocal music can move our emotions and lift our spirits. Beautiful lives can influence us by their example to draw closer to the Lord themselves. A theology lived out for others to see goes further than one that is held only in theory or even articulated with eloquence.

Many will enter the new year with at least a mental list of resolutions, if not a written one. Psalm 40 suggests this year we trade our resolutions for a song — a song people can see. We can aspire to a quality of living that makes a melody using acts of generosity, compassion, fairness and faithfulness as the notes that compose it. Those around us will be able to see these qualities composing our song using shaped notes — those shaped by Christlikeness in action.

The song we live may well leave a more lasting impression than any we might sing. The songs of Mary, Zecharias, Simeon and the angels have staying power because they are enshrined in God's Word that will never pass away.

Songs people see also can have staying power if these songs influence them to receive eternal life. If that happens then we will meet our songs again when we join them in the company of just persons made perfect. 🙏

*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.*



# 'Positive contributions'

## Samford's Creed elected president of Campbell University

J. Bradley Creed was elected the fifth president of Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C., on Jan. 2 by the university's board of trustees.

Creed currently is provost and executive vice president and professor of religion at Samford University in Birmingham. Before his appointment at Samford, he served as dean of George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Creed received a bachelor of arts in religion from Baylor, graduating cum laude. He earned his master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from South-

western Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He pursued further study in Harvard University's Management Development Program and in the Spanish language program at Academia Hispano Americana in Mexico.

Creed has led multiple transformational initiatives during his time at Samford, including the launch of the College of Health Sciences in 2013.

Samford President Andrew

Westmoreland said, "It has been an honor to work alongside Dr. Creed. ... His positive contributions to the academic environment of the campus will be cherished for decades to come."



CREED

Creed and his wife, Kathy, have been married since 1980 and have three children: Caitlin Elizabeth (1987-2007), Charles Vernon and Carrie Grace.

Creed will take office as president of Campbell on July 1. (Campbell University)

## Center for SCIENCE and RELIGION

First Baptist Church of Huntsville  
January 22  
8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

The Samford University Center for Science and Religion will present a free interdenominational workshop for pastors, exploring how faith and emerging science can enrich each other.

Samford faculty will lead discussions on the following topics:

The Seven Deadly Sins of Science and Religion  
*Dr. Steve Donaldson*

Where Do We Come From?  
*Dr. Wilton Bunch*

Is There a Place for the Soul in a Physical Brain?  
*Dr. George Keller*

Can There be Purpose in a World of Chance?  
*Dr. Tom Woolley*

Refreshments and lunch will be provided for registered participants.

Register online at [eve.samford.edu](http://eve.samford.edu)

For information, contact Josh Reeves  
[jreeves@samford.edu](mailto:jreeves@samford.edu) | 205-726-2940

This workshop is one in a series funded by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation.



[www.samford.edu/scienceandreligion](http://www.samford.edu/scienceandreligion)

## LifeWay's values debated in social media — #the15

A recent tweet by LifeWay Research Executive Director Ed Stetzer sparked a social media campaign alleging the bookstore chain values profit more than doctrinal fidelity. Stetzer's tweet characterized people concerned about a reference to Pope Francis by author John Piper as "the same 15 ... who are outraged," inspiring #the15.

Stetzer's comment also stirred an increase of people using a highway marker with the number 15 as their Twitter profile picture to show anger against a denominational elite they say maintains power through bully tactics.

Southern Baptist pastor J.D. Hall said #the15 aren't asking Baptist leaders to outright agree with them, only to show more respect for sincere beliefs of small church pastors and laity. (BNG)

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# Leadership banquet

## UMobile to host 10th annual banquet with guest speaker Ben Carson

The University of Mobile (UMobile) will bring emeritus professor of neurosurgery and conservative motivational speaker Benjamin S. Carson Sr. to Mobile for the 10th annual University of Mobile Leadership Banquet on April 30.

The annual banquet raises financial support for the UMobile Fund. Carson's appearance marks the 10th Leadership Banquet which brings a speaker of national prominence to the Mobile area who uses his or her influence to open doors of op-

portunity for the next generation of leaders.

### Accomplished surgeon

Carson, a renowned pediatric neurosurgeon, completed the first and only successful separation of Siamese twins joined at the back of the head in 1987 and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush, the highest civilian honor possible, in 2008.

In 2001, Carson was named by CNN and *Time* magazine as one of the nation's 20 foremost physicians and scientists. That same

year he was selected by the Library of Congress as one of the 89 "Living Legends."

Previous banquet speakers have included Bush, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow, retired Col. Oliver North, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Newt Gingrich,

former Georgia Gov. and retired U.S. Sen. Zell Miller, *New York Times* best-selling author Andy Andrews and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

For information about sponsorships and tickets, visit [umobile.edu/banquet2015](http://umobile.edu/banquet2015), call the UMobile development office at 251-442-2906 or email [advancement@umobile.edu](mailto:advancement@umobile.edu). (UMobile)

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**PASTOR:** East Centre is seeking a full-time pastor with pastoral experience. We are a Southern Baptist church holding to traditional Baptist biblical views. Please submit resumes to: East Centre Baptist Church Committee, ATTN: Jimmy, 1220 East Main Street, Centre, AL 35960.

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR/CHURCH PLANTER:** Bay Side Baptist Church, Lillian (Gulf Shores area) seeking a bivocational pastor/church planter. Send resumes to: P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549.

**MUSIC MINISTER:** Piney Grove Baptist Church in Ardmore, Ala., is accepting resumes for a part-time music minister. Send resumes to: PGBC, ATTN: Search Committee, 28430 Pinedale Road, Ardmore, AL 35739, or [laryequick@gmail.com](mailto:laryequick@gmail.com).

**INTERIM MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER:** Resumes should be sent to: Greensboro Baptist Church, ATTN: Music/Youth Search Committee, 908 Main Street, Greensboro, AL 36744, or email to: [greensboro@bellsouth.net](mailto:greensboro@bellsouth.net).

**STUDENT MINISTER:** Concord Baptist, Anderson, S.C., is seeking a student minister (grades 6-12). Degree required from an accredited seminary and minimum of three years church/ministry experience. Submit resumes via email to: [jjames@concordbaptist.com](mailto:jjames@concordbaptist.com) or to: Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621, ATTN: Dr. Don Cox. Church website: [concordbaptist.com](http://concordbaptist.com).

**MINISTER OF CHILDREN & PRE-SCHOOL:** Cedar Grove Baptist Church is currently seeking candidates for its minister of children and pre-school. The minister of children and pre-school is responsible to the pastor for planning, coordinating and evaluating the educational ministry of children from birth through fifth grade. This position is responsible for overall curriculum implementation for Sunday morning and evening classes, Wednesday

night classes, VBS (Vacation Bible School), summer camp, GA/RAs and any other children's classes developed by the church. Interested candidates should send their resume and letter of interest to: Cedar Grove Baptist Church, ATTN: Billy Abrams, 2001 Cedar Grove Road, Leeds, AL 35094. For additional information, please contact Billy Abrams at 205-699-4808 or email [billy@cedargroveleeds.org](mailto:billy@cedargroveleeds.org).

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## Want to know GOD?

Pastor Michael B. Oliver  
Trinity Baptist Church, Madison

When I was 6 years old my parents divorced. For a time I lived with my grandparents in Hokes Bluff. Over the years I became particularly close to my granddaddy. I saw how he treated my brother and me with love and how he offered us guidance. He taught me to fish and throw a baseball and how to ski. He was a provider, working hard for long hours. We always went to church where he served as a deacon. When my grandmother passed away I saw my granddaddy weep and experience the deep stages of grief — but later I noticed it was not grief without hope. My granddaddy read his Bible daily and he underlined every word as he read. He taught us to pray before we ate a meal that was a blessing to enjoy.

At some point, I now know, I was seeing Christ in him. God used my granddaddy to reach me. I wanted what he had in his life. It was not always an easy life but he had a joy about him that was so attractive to others. He had what the Bible calls a "peace that surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). When I asked him about the source of his strength and joy he told me about Jesus. I prayed and accepted Christ in my grandparents' living room.

The peace, joy and guiding presence we often see in those devoted to God can be yours too. Christ is eager to be in relationship with us all because we all are loved by God. I remember that day when I knelt on the living room floor and asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and to come into my heart as my Lord and Savior. At that moment of prayer, salvation happened and a lifelong journey of walking with God began. If you are looking for more in your life — peace, joy and an abiding presence of God's love — you can kneel and pray and accept the gift of God's salvation and love too. Simply bow, speak your heart to God, ask for forgiveness and invite Christ to come into your life for good. Before you know it, others will see the difference in you; they will see Christ in you. 🙏

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# A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

## Satisfaction Guaranteed — John 6:35

Every morning people all over the world wake up looking for something they think will satisfy them. It is not necessarily a conscious thought. They start their day the regular way, getting ready to do whatever their day demands. They are not thinking, “Maybe today will be the day I find something that satisfies me.” They do not sit in the Chick-fil-A drive-thru line intentionally processing the possibility that this might be the day that changes their lives. They get dressed, eat breakfast, say goodbye to their families and head off to the office, the classroom, the shop or wherever their day takes them thinking about what their day will hold. Will it be busy? Will their 10 o’clock appointment show? Will they close the deal? Will James have his homework done this time?

Beneath the surface of their daily activities people live every day with a longing. Sometimes it’s subtle. Sometimes it’s much more pronounced. But it always leaves them looking for something that will fill up a constant, nagging emptiness inside.

### Speaking to the heart

The crowd Jesus spoke to in John 6 was no different. It had been a busy 24 hours. The day before they had heard Him teach and seen Him feed more than 5,000 people with a picnic lunch. That morning stories were beginning to circulate about how He had walked on the water and rescued His disciples from last night’s storm. They came to Jesus again that morning because they were looking for something. They wanted Him to meet a “felt need” in their lives, give them a new religious experience or “wow” them in a way nothing in their lives ever could.

Jesus did none of those things, not on that day. There were no miraculous demonstrations, no breakfasts, no vending machine religious formulas. On that day He cut through all of the stuff they thought would satisfy them and spoke directly to their real need. Listen to what He said.

Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”

Jesus said, “If you are hungry, if you are thirsty, come to Me. I will satisfy you.” In the phrase “I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus answers the great question of the human heart.

By John T. Brock, D.Min.

*Brock served churches in Mississippi and Arkansas before becoming pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Florence, in 2001. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Mississippi College, a master of divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry from Reformed Theological Seminary. He has served in various capacities in both the Mississippi and Arkansas Baptist conventions and been active in local associations. He and his wife of 26 years, Charman, have two children.*



He satisfies the deepest longing of my heart.

He made it personal. It is not about the things He gives us. It is not about the religious expressions of our faith. It is not even about the miraculous demonstrations of His power. It is about Him.

In a book title the late well-known Southern Baptist pastor and leader Adrian Rogers said, “Believe In Miracles, But Trust In Jesus.” It was no coincidence that Jesus made this statement less than 24 hours after He fed the multitude. He wanted them to see past the miracle of physical bread and know He is the Bread of Life.

The crowd brought up the manna, the bread from heaven the Israelites ate in the wilderness. Like so many other examples from the Old Testament that bread was a picture, a foreshadowing of Jesus Himself, the “true Bread out of heaven.”

### Everything we need

When we come to God through faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ we find Him to be everything we need. Every day we find something new and beautiful about Him to love. Once we taste and see the Lord is good we know He satisfies our deepest hunger. Our souls will never be truly and deeply satisfied until He is enough.

He always satisfies the deepest longing of my heart.

He made it permanent. He said, “I am.” He didn’t say, “I was,” or “I will be.” He said, “I am the Bread of Life.” As long as the Israelites needed the manna it was

there every morning. The writer of Lamentations described the goodness of the Lord like this, “The Lord’s lovingkindness indeed never ceases, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22–23).

When I wake up in the morning I am hungry for physical food. I look forward to new experiences. I may be apprehensive about the challenges of the day. I may have to deal with some difficult situations and do battle against temptations that invariably come but I always am satisfied with Jesus. He is the Bread of Life.

### Bread of Life

He is the only one who can satisfy the deepest longing of my heart.

Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life. He made it clear that anyone who “comes to” Him and “believes in” Him will never hunger and never thirst. The invitation is open to anyone. In verse 40 of this chapter He said so.

“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life” (John 6:40).

Even though the invitation to eternal life and the opportunity to have life’s deepest longing satisfied is open to everyone, not everyone will experience it. Believing in Him is the dividing line. He said this in John 14, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

We all are sinners by nature and by choice. We are separated from God by our sin and it is exactly that sin and that separation that makes us so deeply hungry at the core of who we are. What separates us from God also places us under the sentence of His judgment which is death. What we deserve for our sin is death and hell and to live with that hunger and longing for all of eternity.

But the good news of the gospel is that God loves us too much to leave us that way, so He sent His Son, Christ Jesus, to be our substitute and die in our place. That is His grace. Only when we respond in faith by placing our trust in Christ and Christ alone can we have eternal life. Only then can we know peace with God. Only then is the deepest longing and the real hunger of our heart satisfied. 🙏

# Running & flying

By June Mathews  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Orville Rogers was six years old, his father left home never to be heard from until April 2014 in the form of a half-sister Rogers never knew existed. When he traveled from his home in Dallas to visit her and other relatives in Oregon, he learned the newly discovered branch of his family tree included a Nike Inc. executive. So it was hardly surprising when Rogers showed up for the 13th Annual CrossPoint 5K at CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville, wearing Nike shoes and clothing.

The surprising part was that a man Rogers’ age would be running a 5K. He recently celebrated his 97th birthday.

Invited to participate in the November 2014 run by CrossPoint Pastor Ryan Whitley, Rogers spoke at CrossPoint’s morning worship services the day after the Nov. 22 race. Whitley introduced the nonagenarian as a world record holder in every category in his age bracket, including the USA Track & Field’s Masters Outstanding Overall Male Athlete in 2013. But he also noted athletic accolades are secondary to Rogers.



ROGERS

“He is not into world records,” Whitley said. “He is into glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. He does it in his life. He does it in his generosity. He does it in his words.”

Rogers was inspired to become a runner nearly 47 years ago after reading the book “Aerobics” by Kenneth Cooper. He has since accumulated more than 40,000 miles.

“That’s not a lot for world record holders,” he said, citing other similarly placed runners who have run upwards of 180,000 miles.

A strong advocate for maintaining one’s physical health through exercise, Rogers said while physical fitness is important, spiritual fitness is essential to a good life.

“I became a Christian when I was 10 years old,” he said, “but I didn’t go (to church) much until I was in college.”

As a senior in college Rogers turned his back on the idea of a career in flying, which he’d wanted all his life, because he felt God calling him to Christian service. So the following year he enrolled in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Less than three weeks later he received a draft notice, a development he considered “God’s way of turning me around.”

It was in the service that Rogers realized his dream of learning to fly, becoming part of a training command in which he instructed pilots during World War II.

Rogers later began flying missionary planes to and from such places as Southeast Asia, Africa and South America. At varying times he delivered mail and supplies to missionaries, transported missionary kids and delivered missionary planes around the world.

“I was one happy camper when I found out I could serve God by flying,” he said.

Rogers has been a member of First Baptist Church, Dallas, since 1946. 🙏

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



## William Stephen Eubanks

50-year Alabama Baptist pastor dies



EUBANKS

Longtime Alabama pastor William Stephen Eubanks died Dec. 27, 2014. He was 75.

A Boaz native, Eubanks received his education from Samford University in Birmingham and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He served as a pastor for 50 years of churches such as First Baptist Church, Crossville; First Baptist Church, Red Bay; First Baptist Church, Attalla; Bethany Baptist Church, Horton; and multiple in Boaz.

Eubanks is survived by his wife, Barbara; three children; and eight grandchildren. (Maggie Walsh)

## Ralph Rogers

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor dies

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor Ralph Rogers died Sept. 2, 2014. He was 82.

Rogers attended Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, and served as pastor of churches in Tuscaloosa and later as pastor of the former East Fowl River Baptist Church, Theodore, and Lagoon Baptist Church, Gulf Shores.

A member of First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile, at the time of his death, Rogers was preceded in death by one son and is survived by his wife, Maxine, four children, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



ROGERS



### BIRMINGHAM

► **James R. Sullens** is the new interim pastor for **Hughes Memorial Church, Pinson**. He earned a bachelor's degree from Florida International University in Miami and a doctor

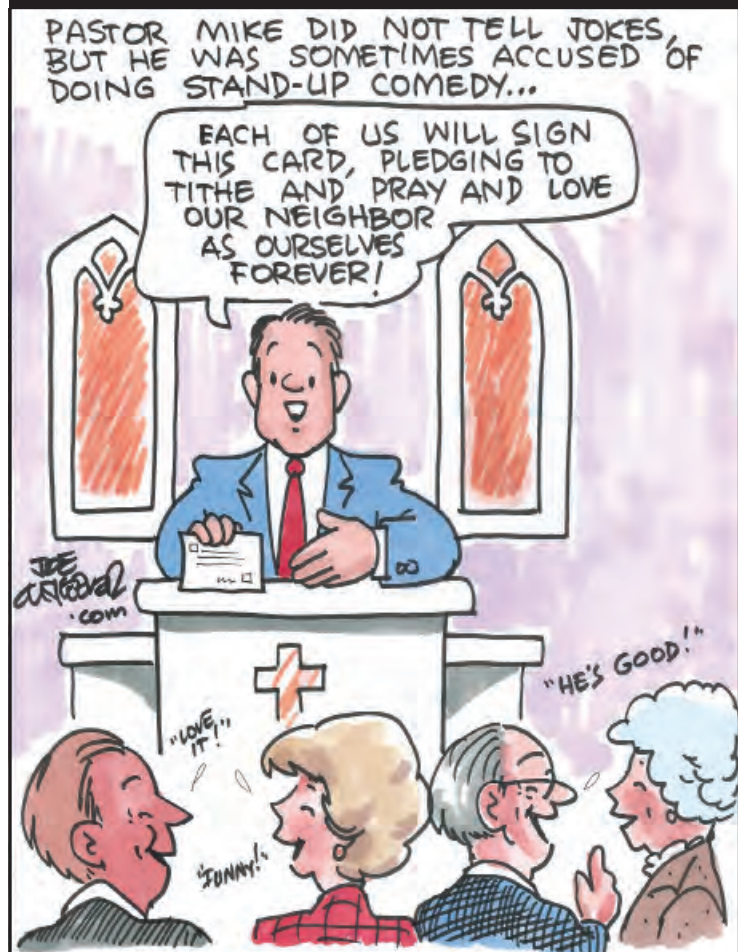
of philosophy and a doctor of theology from Louisiana Baptist University in Shreveport. He previously served at First Church, Cutler Ridge, in Cutler Bay, Fla. He and his wife, Anne, have two children.

### COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will host a gospel sing with Mary Turner and The Gospel Messengers on Jan. 10, 6-8 p.m. Refreshments will be served after the singing. Hosea Parker is pastor. ☪



## REFLECTIONS



**D**ue to the ever-changing landscape of today's churches, Samford University is offering online pastoral training that will equip ministers and lay people called to teach God's Word and lead God's people. That is why we are excited to announce that in January 2015, Samford's Ministry Training Institute will launch our first ever online Certificate in Pastoral Ministries.

This certificate will focus on preaching, church administration, leadership and the mission of the church under the instruction of a trained and experienced pastor. The courses are affordable at \$50 per course and the student can take courses from the comfort of their home. Financial aid also is available to those who qualify.

Registration is now open and there is limited space for the first course, "Intro to Preaching." Classes begin the last week of January.

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# Helping congregations

## Samford's pastoral care center receives \$800,000 grant

Samford University's Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence (RCPE) in Birmingham has received a grant of \$800,000 from Lilly Endowment, Inc., in Indianapolis for a five-year program to implement new congregational resourcing initiatives.

The grant will enable RCPE to expand its program for ministers to provide new resources intended to advance congregational excellence. The initiatives include resource specialists to help congregations identify and address a wide variety of needs, a resource library and guide, small targeted seminars and workshops and

resource mini-grants. Outcomes assessment, a research project conducted by the provost's office and a pilot project to test a new resourcing method also are being made possible by the grant.

"The resourcing needs of congregations vary widely depending on context and each congregation's unique challenges and opportunities," said Michael K. Wilson, RCPE director. "These needs can be of a practical nature such as long-range or strategic planning, a pastor search, volunteer enlistment and training, financial stewardship or space utilization issues to name a few. In other cases resourcing needs may be more

philosophical in nature. For example, assessing core values and the implications these values have on future missions and ministry."

Wilson noted congregations "typically look externally" to find assistance specific to an area of missions and ministry. "Fortunately, or more often unfortunately, a dizzying array of programs, services, coaches, consultants and agencies exists a click away that range widely in suitability, flexibility and cost," he said.

In most cases, he added, "it is very difficult to verify the credentials or purported outcomes of these resources."

RCPE will offer a means by which congregations first can learn to think creatively about their needs and then generate the best possible solutions utilizing both their own resources and wisely chosen outside resources, Wilson said.

### Well-regarded consultants

The Samford program will enlist a team of 10 to 15 experienced current and/or former pastors and well-regarded denominational consultants to serve as resource specialists. Resource specialists will function much like coaches, utilizing a technique called facilitated self-learning where congregations discover their own needs and solutions. RCPE then will help provide resources to address their needs or to help them act upon their discoveries.

Wilson also noted RCPE will help congregations in the following ways:

- ▶ Resource Library and Guide — RCPE maintains a library on subjects related to pastoral ministry and congregational life.

- ▶ Resourcing mini-grants — Congregations can apply for one-time mini-grants of up to \$1,500 to be applied toward expenses related to resourcing goals and needs chosen for action by the congregation.

- ▶ Resource consulting pilot project — The program will conduct a pilot project to investigate the impact of facilitated peer learning as an effective resourcing strategy. This approach will bring together two or three churches who want to work together to learn from each other as they respond to challenges and opportunities in their ministry setting. The first project already is underway between Baptist Church of the Covenant, Birmingham, and St. Charles Baptist Church, New Orleans. (Samford)

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2014

# Christian Book Award Winners

## Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem

By Kevin DeYoung (Crossway)

2014 Christian Book of the Year

## The MacArthur Study Bible NIV

By John MacArthur (Thomas Nelson)

Bible Division

## Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (2nd ed.)

By Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin (InterVarsity Press)

Bible Reference Division

## The Sparkle Box

By Jill Hardie, Illustrated by Christine Kornacki (Ideals Publications)

Children Division

## Iscariot: A Novel of Judas

By Tosca Lee (Howard Books)

Fiction Division

## He Walks Among Us: Encounters with Christ in a Broken World

By Richard and Renee Stearns (Thomas Nelson)

Inspiration Division

## Falling Into Place

By Hattie Kauffman (Baker Books)

New Author Division

## C.S. Lewis — A Life

By Alister McGrath (Tyndale House)

Non-Fiction Division

Source: Christian Book Expo



Photo by Doug Rogers

# No 'HIGHER honor'

## Bowden receives Alabama Football Legend Award

By Doug Rogers  
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

**B**irmingham native Bobby Bowden (center) poses with the Alabama Football Legend Award, presented by Regions Bank at the 2014 Raycom Media Camellia Bowl luncheon at the Renaissance Hotel in Montgomery, Dec. 19, 2014.

The former Florida State University head coach attended Woodlawn High School in Birmingham and spent one season as a freshman quarterback at the University of Alabama in 1948. He then transferred to Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham where he played quarterback and running back.

He returned to Howard first as offensive coordinator from 1949 to 1952 then as head coach from 1959 to 1962 before leaving for West Virginia University and then Florida State. Bowden was

raised in the former Ruhama Baptist Church, Birmingham.

"Nothing that you receive is any higher honor than when it comes from the state of Alabama," Bowden said. "That is where I was raised. I'm really happy and pleased the Camellia Bowl has selected me for this honor."

### Annual award

Pictured with Bowden are Johnny Williams (left), executive director of the Raycom Media Camellia Bowl, and Gov. Robert Bentley. Williams said the award will be given annually to honor a different coach or player with Alabama ties that has contributed to the growth of football.

Williams said, "We are pleased to have Coach Bobby Bowden as the first Alabama Football Legend. We are very appreciative to Coach Bowden for his service to college football." ❧

## 'Unbroken' earns high rating for faith compatibility

**T**he World War II film "Unbroken" earned a 4-out-of-5-star rating from Faith Driven Consumer, a consumer advocacy organization that measures faith compatibility of Hollywood films with Christian audiences.

Released on Christmas Day, "Unbroken" is based on Laura Hillenbrand's 2010 book, "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption." It tells the true story of Olympic athlete Louis Zamperini, later a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force, who became an American hero who endured two years as a Japanese prisoner of war.

The 4-star rating indicates the film "leans strongly toward a biblical narrative" and is determined by ratings in five categories. "Unbroken" received four stars in the

categories of overall faith and/or biblical relevance; faith-compatible depiction of characters and character relationships; and faith-compatible depiction of situations.

Chris Stone, founder of Faith Driven Consumer, said, "'Unbroken' ... positively presents core biblical concepts such as hard work, overcoming adversity, forgiveness, love, Christ-like self-sacrifice and God's sovereign hand."

And while movie critic Phil Boatwright agrees "Unbroken" is a solid film, he said filmmakers missed the real story.

Director Angelina Jolie bravely depicted Zamperini's torment at

the hands of the Japanese, despite the politically correct climate in which we live, Boatwright said.

Jolie will catch some flak for the depiction, but it was a brave and honest decision. What makes the movie good and not great is in the two closing lines, he noted.

"We are told that Zamperini came to forgive his tormentors, including the camp commander known as 'the Bird,' who was particularly barbaric," Boatwright said. "Reading

those lines I thought, 'there's your story,' but Zamperini's conversion and healing process are given virtually no screen time." (Faith Driven Consumer, BP)





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Photo courtesy of North Garland Baptist Fellowship

Tony Mathews (left), pastor of North Garland Baptist Fellowship, Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, talks with an English teacher on a vision trip to Ecuador with a group of other African-American pastors.

# Unique connectivity

## Shared ethnicity helps African Americans reach Afro-Ecuadorians

**T**he Ecuadorian boy was awestruck. He couldn't reconcile what he was seeing with what he was hearing.

The boy didn't know that people who had African skin like his spoke anything but Spanish.

"He followed us around the little village just mesmerized that he was seeing African Americans there with the Afro-Ecuadorians," recalled Tony Mathews, pastor of North Garland Baptist Fellowship, a predominantly African-American congregation in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

Afro-Ecuadorians are descendants of slaves who formed settlements on Ecuador's coast. The Spanish sailed the Afro-Ecuadorians' ancestors to Ecuador in the early 16th century. Some of them escaped from shipwrecks on voyages intended to reach countries farther south. Today more than 600,000 Afro-Ecuadorians represent approximately 5 percent of Ecuador's population.

### Encouraging pastors

Mathews visited Ecuador for the first time in the fall of 2013 at the urging of Keith Jefferson, an International Mission Board (IMB) strategist who recruits and mobilizes Southern Baptist African-American congregations to deeper international missions involvement. Jefferson led the trip to Ecuador with a small group of Dallas-area African-American pastors.

His goal was to encourage the pastors and their congregations to partner with IMB missionaries Johnny and Donna Maust from Alabama and Louisiana who are sharing the gospel with Afro-Ecuadorians, an unreached people group along coastal Ecuador.

After 13 years of church planting and training others to plant churches among the Mestizo people in the Andes mountains of Ecuador, the Mausts moved to the northern coast, where there has been no Southern Baptist missionary presence for about 12 years.

After dropping his I.D. card during a riverboat

ride with the Texas pastors, Johnny Maust contacted a local police officer to help him recoup his permit.

In the process Johnny Maust shared the gospel with the man. The officer asked questions about Jesus and accompanied the missions group to dinner.

Mathews recalled, "It was just a blessing to see how God used the circumstance ... for us to have an opportunity to witness to this police officer."

The visiting group of pastors discovered that African Americans have an inroad to share the gospel among Afro-Ecuadorians because of their interest in interacting with people who share their skin color but who speak a different language than they do.

"We automatically have an affinity with these Afro-Ecuadorians and people of color that otherwise we wouldn't have and it really does in many instances open the door in ways that are unique," Mathews said.

Billy Bell, pastor of New Creation Bible Church, Dallas, who was part of the initial vision trip, said, "It was (an) overwhelming response because we looked like them. It was easy to establish relationship."

During his visit with the Mausts, Bell realized how churches like his "can be plugged in to the overall ministry of those missionaries because they have a large field to cover."

Bell, also a church-planting consultant for Dallas Baptist Association, had been on missions trips before, but this was the first time he had helped missionaries establish a presence somewhere instead of conducting activities for already established ministries.

As the pastors spent time with the missionaries it gave them a glimpse into the everyday challenges of living among an under-evangelized people group.

"I saw the tribulations and the trials they had to go through as missionaries to just go in and try to establish those relationships so the seeds of the gospel could be planted and I really appreciate them a lot more than I did before," Bell said.

To see videos about this ministry, visit [vimeo.com/112266887](http://vimeo.com/112266887).

To contact Keith Jefferson, email [kjefferson@imb.org](mailto:kjefferson@imb.org) or call 1-800-999-3113, ext. 1422. (BP)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### State-sponsored media attacks continue in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — Uzbekistan's state-sponsored media continues its routine of attacking and naming people who exercise the right to freedom of religion or belief which the state has made solemn international obligations to implement.

Media attacks are a routine and long-standing part of Uzbekistan's attacks on freedom of religion or belief and other human rights.

The authors of media attacks are not only journalists. Judge Oltinbek Mansurov of Navoi City Criminal Court published an article in the Russian-language newspaper *Banner of Friendship*. In it the judge attacked two married couples.

Ten days later, Sept. 5, 2014, the judge fined one of the couples he attacked, Artur and Irina Alpayev, 50 times and 40 times their minimum monthly respective salaries for having allegedly "illegal" religious literature. Mansurov threatened the couple that "we will continue fining you unless you stop storing religious literature in your home."

In his article Mansurov called the Council of Baptist Churches a "destructive sect," urging people to "be careful. Remember that often the activity of nontraditional religions is destructive." The article claimed Baptists meet for "illegal" worship in their private homes, "illegally" keep religious literature in their homes and "cloud the minds of young people."

Mansurov also gave the names and addresses of the people he attacked and claimed they had been under surveillance by Navoi Regional Police since 2012. Close surveillance of people exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief is common.

### 15 Christians slain in 2 Muslim attacks in Nigeria

DONGA, Nigeria — In Taraba state in northeast Nigeria more than 100 Muslim Fulani herdsmen invaded Sabon Gida Shagogo village in the Donga local government area in the early morning Dec. 17, 2014, area resident Ahijo Uhaa Gbasha said. Attacking at about 4 a.m. when military soldiers on routine patrol had just left the village, the assailants set fire to church buildings and houses as they killed 10 Christians, he said.

Taraba state police spokesman Joseph Kwaji confirmed the attack, adding that security agencies have stepped up efforts to curtail violence against unarmed citizens.

In Kaduna state on the same day five Christians were killed and 15 houses were destroyed in an early morning attack on the predominantly Christian village of Angwan Dauda about six miles from Fadan Karshi. This apparently was in retaliation for soldiers shooting a Muslim herdsman to death after he stabbed a soldier trying to arrest him for attacking a Christian farmer.

Among the victims were a 1-year-old boy and his mother. The father of the baby was killed in an ambush Dec. 15 by the same Muslim Fulani herdsmen.

The attack comes after similar attacks by Fulani herdsmen in Fadan Karshi, Angwan Ganye and Karshi Daji towns.

Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency reported more than 1,500 Christians died in similar attacks in the area in 2014.

### Iraqi Christians still displaced after ISIS invasion

ERBIL, Iraq — Half a year after losing everything, displaced Christians are asking where their place is in the world. Should they wait out the bloodbath in the Middle East, or should they abandon a region some say betrayed them long ago and seek out a new life elsewhere?

On June 4, 2014, after pushing through parts of northeast Syria and Iraq, Islamic extremists ISIS invaded Mosul, gaining control of the city in five days and sending all Christians fleeing for their lives. Two months later ISIS pushed further south to the cities of Qaraqosh, Karemlesh and Bartella — setting off another wave of displaced people.

While ISIS fighters have raped, beheaded and threatened non-Muslims, Iraqi Christian refugee Douglas Bazi said Islamic groups often try to portray themselves as separate from "radical" Islamists. He said much of what they believe and their desire to harm Christians is the same. ☩