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Most churchgoers place faith above football, study shows

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**God had a different plan — one of love and forgiveness.**

# 'God intervened'



123rf.com

## Alabamian shares story of forgiveness, healing amid past with abortions

**S**tarr Rogers was in her third trimester when the lady looked her square in the face and said it. "Go back to Alabama and have your baby."

She didn't see that coming. Rogers had already had four abortions and clinic employees had always been more than willing to facilitate her choice.

But something different happened that day in Atlanta, she said — God intervened.

"When you go into these places (abortion clinics) all they want to do is get you in and get your money," she said.

### 'Don't do this'

But when they sent Rogers in to talk with a clinic employee about the procedure, "she told me all the things that they would do with my baby. She even showed me where they put the babies after they were aborted," Rogers said. "She told me, 'Don't do this.'"

Rogers started to cry. She didn't want to do it. She said so.

And the clinic employee hugged her and told her to go home.

"So that's what I did," Rogers said. "And I had a son."

It was the beginning of God redeeming a path of pain and brokenness that had started when Rogers was just a teenager growing up in Eclectic.

"At age 16, I was married. A few years later I became involved with a married man," she said. "We had an affair that produced a daughter, whom I passed off as my husband's child."

The affair lasted 10 years — and brought four more pregnancies.

"All four times I aborted them," Rogers said.

And when her marriage dissolved and she married the father of her children, she became pregnant a sixth time.



**SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE**  
**SUNDAY IS JAN. 18.**

*You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*  
Psalm 139:13

"Like the other times, he pitched a fit and demanded of me that I get rid of this pregnancy too," Rogers said. "So I traveled to Atlanta. I was in my third trimester and Alabama wouldn't allow an abortion that far along."

It was there she got the unexpected advice that saved her son's life.

But it would still be a while before she got the intervention that would save her own.

"I knew something was wrong

with me," Rogers said. "I couldn't be at peace. There was a constant churning inside of me all the time."

The anger and her broken heart were unbearable, she said. She tried to numb the pain with more extramarital affairs, but they didn't satisfy her.

### Writing letters

She began to plan her suicide. "I wrote letters to each one of my children about how sorry I was for committing suicide and that I loved them, but I just couldn't take the pain anymore," Rogers said.

But God had a different plan — one of love and forgiveness, she said.

One day at the library, Rogers picked up a local Christian magazine and saw an ad that asked, "Do you need healing from your abortions?"

She called the phone number. And that started her on the road that changed everything, she said.

(See 'I... learned,' page 7)



Faith and Family

**Premarital counseling**  
Coming next week...

# COMMENT

## It Is What's Inside That Counts

**M**y wife Pat and I are hikers. Not the serious kind that carry 50-pound packs and sleep on the trail for days at a time. We are recreational hikers who like to spend the day meandering along lonely trails in the western North Carolina mountains.

One trail we especially enjoy is the Bartrum Trail named for William Bartrum, an early naturalist who explored much of the southeast including Alabama between 1773 and 1777. We even have a picture of a section of the trail hanging in our living room. The Bartrum Trail is not as popular as the famous Appalachian Trail but it is just as beautiful and more enjoyable because you are alone most of the time.

The trail is not an easy hike. More than one experienced hiker has called parts of the trail brutal. It can be steep and rocky. Parts of it we have climbed on all fours. Other parts we have been assisted by ropes to pull ourselves up the rocky ledges.

### God's creation

There are some beautiful parts like along Jones Knob where you walk through laurel and rhododendron tunnels. When they are in bloom it is simply gorgeous. In the fall when the leaves are turning the mountainsides seem alive with splashes of red and gold and yellow and orange. It is hard to imagine a prettier site.

We've found a few places we especially like. One is a rock cliff overlook a few hundred yards off the Bartrum Trail. From there the mountain peaks parade off as far as the eye can see. The hardwoods are interspersed with pine making it especially beautiful. Most of the time you can watch osprey and other birds of prey diving off the mountainside at incredible speeds.

We first saw the area from a lookout along the trail so we searched until we found it. Our special spot is a couple of hours from the trailhead on this section of the trail so we sometimes pack a lunch, occasionally a good book and spend most of the day in the woods.



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

One summer day we were making our way along the trail when we spotted a spiderweb. Spiderwebs are not unusual along a sparsely used trail. It is easy to get a strand of spider silk across your face or tangled in your hair. But this spiderweb was not on the trail. It was wound across an opening behind where someone had made a campfire sometime in the past. The web glistened in the speckled sun making it easy to see the anchor strands woven around branches of two different bushes.

It was a big web, not perfectly round but angled from each line extending from the center of the web to its supporting branches. By some marvel of engineering, when each strand got back to its starting place it looked like unbroken thread. Each section of the web seemed symmetrical with each of the others.

In the middle of the web sat a healthy looking spider. Judging by the size of the web his future would be as prosperous as his past.

### Special experience

We stopped for a minute to catch our breath and admire the artistry of the spiderweb before resuming our trek to our secret place. We ate our lunch, lay in the sun, enjoyed watching the birds, sat in awe of the views and enjoyed sharing a special experience.

If you know much about summer in the North

Carolina mountains, then you know the weather can change quickly and it did. We saw the gathering clouds in the far distance and I immediately regretted taking our ponchos out of the backpack. We gathered up our leftovers and headed back to the car hoping to make it before the rain caught us.

The rain won. Summer rain storms can be intense and this one was — huge drops coming down like waves of water blown by the wind.

Pat and I tried to find shelter. We stopped behind some rocks but that did not work. We each got behind a huge tree trunk but that was of little use. Finally we each hunkered under thick laurel hoping that would lessen the rain hitting us. By the time the rain storm passed we were both drenched as if we had been swimming. Water dripped from our heads and puddled in our shoes.

Our spirits were as wet as our bodies. We thought more about our present condition — more than an hour from the car and soaking wet — than we did about the good time we had shared earlier that day. Our pace was slow and we weren't saying much to one another except questioning why I had left the ponchos in the car.

### Preparing for a future

That is when we came back to the place we had seen the spider web. The spider had fared no better than Pat and I. The top anchor lines had broken. The web lay suspended by the lower lines still attached to the bushes with about half the web lying on the ground.

But the spider seemed more hopeful than Pat and I were at that moment. From one of the taller branches he was descending with what appeared to be the second anchor line of a new web. For a few moments we stood there spellbound by the spider who would not be defeated by the rain and wind that destroyed his masterfully spun web.

The spider was back at work rebuilding, preparing for a future that could not be taken from him by nature's elements. With what was inside him, the spider would re-weave his web. It would be as beautiful as the first, perhaps more so. Because of what was inside him he would ensure a future.

First John 4:4 says, "the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." No matter what elements the world throws at us, the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world.

Jesus promised that He is with us always (Matt. 28:20). Because Christ lives in our hearts and because "He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world" in all things we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37), even when the elements of life have done their worst. 🙏

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

#### STAND AND GREET

I was surprised when I read the article ("Rainer aims to help churches retain first-time guests" in the Jan. 1 issue) saying that many people do not like the "stand and greet" portion of the church service. In my opinion that is an important part of the service because visitors should be welcomed. Sometimes we don't notice that visitors are present until we stand to greet. I think anyone who is truly looking for a church to join would not object to meeting a few of the members. (Note that I said "a few" — because

one person said "literally the whole congregation" welcomed them. I agree that would be overwhelming.) I have visited in churches that did not have the meet and greet and I thought they seemed cold and unfriendly.

The article states that many guests are introverts. Probably there are not as many introverts as there are people who just want to attend but not really be a part of the church.

As for the "germaphobes" I guess we could leave off the handshakes and hugs, but we could still speak to one another.

Make adjustments as necessary but don't do away with this part of the service.

Peggy French  
Pelham, Ala.

#### WHAT IS COMPASSION?

Let's ask ourselves the question: What is compassion? It could very well be having a desire to help others. (See "Letters," page 9)





"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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## Most churchgoers place faith above football, study shows

**M**ost American churchgoers would rather attend church than watch their favorite football team, a LifeWay Research study shows. But a few die-hard fans are willing to miss out on worship to watch a game.

About 1 in 7 churchgoers (15 percent) said they'd skip church in order to watch their favorite football team, according to a survey of 994 churchgoers.

Researchers found most of the faithful balk at skipping church for football.

More than 8 in 10 (83 percent) disagree with the statement: "I would skip a weekly worship service in order to watch my favorite football team."

Many worshippers had particularly strong feelings — nearly 7 in 10 (68 percent) strongly disagree.

### 'Divine revelation'

"Most churchgoers put divine revelation ahead of division rivalries," said Scott McConnell, vice president of Nashville-based LifeWay Research. But churchgoers are more devoted to their team. Especially when the team is doing well.

Two years ago, Daniel Espy, pastor of The Bridge Church, Snohomish, Wash., hosted a special 8 a.m. church service in order to accommodate Seahawks fans, whose team had found suc-

cess after years of struggling.

The early service started as a joke on the church's Facebook page. Espy joked that all churches in Seattle should hold early services, so fans could worship

and then watch a playoff game. The idea took off and eventually landed the church on the front page of the local newspaper.

These days The Bridge has two services, making it easier for church members to worship before games. Still attendance goes down when the Seahawks have an early game.

### Kickoff time

"Attendance can swing about 30 to 40 percent, depending on kickoff," Espy said.

LifeWay Research found faithful football fans in the West (22 percent) are more willing to skip church than those in the South (13 percent) or Northeast (13 percent.)

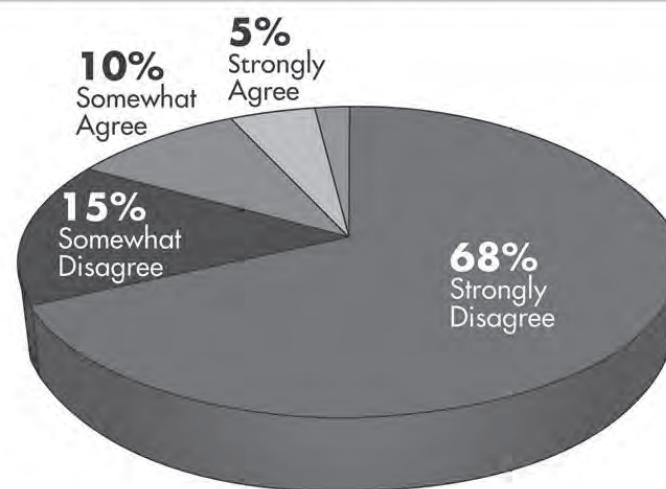
About 1 in 4 church-going men (22 percent) said they'd skip church to watch football. That drops to 1 in 10 for women churchgoers. Catholic football fans (20 percent) are more willing to skip church than evangelicals (12 percent).

Espy said he's taken a good-natured approach to those who skip church to watch football. He said that works better than a guilt trip.

"Honestly we just try to show people that Jesus is better than football," he said. (BP)

Among Churchgoers:

"I would skip a weekly worship service to watch my favorite football team."



2% Not Sure

LifeWayResearch.com



# What does it mean to be generous?

## Generosity starts with gratitude, Baylor professor says

**A** Baylor University professor has been preaching a message some may consider radical in American society — even during the holidays: generosity.

It's also a concept close to the hearts of pastors struggling to convince shrinking memberships to tithe at consistent and increasing levels. Individual giving to either charity or church must become a way of life, not a one-and-done deal, experts on philanthropy and tithing say.

Tithing is a beginning point for Christian response to the grace of God, said George Bullard, a church consultant and president of the Columbia Partnership.

"Generosity as an act of gratitude really begins to take shape once the foundational concept of tithing has been achieved," he said.

At Baylor scholar Andy Hogue has focused on philanthropy and generosity — and he's been sharing that message with students in his "Philanthropy and the Public Good" course.

"What does it mean to be a generous person?" asked Hogue, director of Baylor's Civic Education and Community Service Program.

### Spirit of generosity

"Whatever our station, however much money or resources we have, we all have something to share and something to give," he said.

Hogue offered four ways individuals and families can develop a spirit of generosity in the new year.

► *Generosity starts with gratitude.* "That is the very first step, just being grateful for what we have, but also realizing that to those given much, much is

expected, and to begin thinking about not possessing things but stewarding things," Hogue said. "Think of the many things we have that might benefit others, whether that is our time, our talents or our finances."

► *Generosity is more than just a transaction.*

"Think of philanthropy, generosity and giving as more than writing a check. Think of it as something that can be transformative and realize that there is no such thing as an unhappy generous person."

► *Generosity is a muscle you have to exercise.* "If we can't give of ourselves when we have limited means, what makes us expect that we would do it when we have more means? We all ... have resources that can be put to use for the benefit of someone else."

► *Generosity can be creative.*

There are inspired ways to give birthday or Christmas gifts in honor of a family member or friend that bring about a beautiful thing Hogue likes to call the "philanthropy of collaboration."

"Imagine the many things that come together in this one simple act: you, the giver, are enriched by the series of events you set into motion while the person you honor with the gift appreciates your generosity and imagination," Hogue said.

"You can go the traditional route — make a donation and give the person a piece of paper (acknowledging the gift) — or there are amazing web-based resources that can help people make very impactful gifts even with limited amounts," Hogue said. "You give five dollars and ... it can go toward fighting disease in Africa, providing books for a teacher's classroom or buying someone in a poor country a goat or a cow ... that can be a source of ... income." (BNG)

**"Whatever our station ... we all have something to share and something to give."**

**Andy Hogue  
Baylor University**

## Belk Baptist installs new roof thanks to donations



Photo courtesy of Fayette Baptist Association

Belk Baptist Church recently finished installing a new metal roof on its church auditorium thanks to donations and support from Fayette Baptist Association, Kennedy Baptist Church and Riverside Baptist Church, Kennedy. Gene Nabors (second from left) is pastor. Also pictured are Kerry Martin (left) pastor of Kennedy Baptist; Larry Barnes (second from right), director of missions for Fayette Association; and Craig Holliman, pastor of Riverside Baptist.

## Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

### Phyllis Everage



**EVERAGE**

*Fleetwood Baptist Church, Glenwood Salem-Troy Baptist Association*

**FAVORITE VERSES:** John 3:16; Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:28

**FAVORITE HYMNS:** "He Touched Me" and "Because He Lives"

**HOBBIES:** Reading, studying the Bible, watching wildlife, collecting seashells, baking 7-Up pound cakes to give to people and

visiting a nursing home

**FAMILY STATUS:** Widow for 12 years after 52 years of marriage to husband, Curt; daughter, Calista Everage; son, Anthony Everage; two grandchildren

*Phyllis Everage, 82, of Henderson, nurtured more than 50 children in the 30 years she operated a home day care. At the same time she was active in her church — in Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), as a Sunday School teacher to children, assistant teacher to women and nursery worker. Currently she is a member of the prayer awareness team, prayer chain team, choir and food service committee; worker in Vacation Bible School and volunteer with the Salem-Troy Association food ministry. At her church she also assists in a ministry to provide food and flowers to individuals during illness or grief.*

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

A: I was a "lost" church member. I know that it is possible to know about Jesus without knowing Him in my heart. At a young age I joined the church. As an adult, I was teaching Sunday School and WMU. The Holy Spirit works in us and reveals to us the things that are wrong in our lives and points us to Jesus. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and revealed that I was not saved (during a church revival). ... God shined His light on my heart and I saw it as He did. I saw that it was filled with sin and foolish pride. ... Jesus reached down and lifted me up and set my feet on the Solid Rock. I was 31 years old.

**Q: What is your ministry work?**

A: My ministry is to reach out to the lost, the lonely, the sick, the old, those who are burdened, little children, drug addicts and anyone who just

needs a touch of the Master's hand.

**Q: What does your ministry work demand?**

A: It demands a lot of studying, concentrating and just taking the time to look into the needs people have. It demands a lot of time with the Lord for Him to lead me and show me and tell me what to do. ... It takes a lot of prayer.

**Q: What do you get from the ministry work?**

A: Oh, I get blessings on top of blessings. To help someone is one of the most important things in my life.

**Q: How do family members support you?**

A: They support me completely. They are always there when I need them. God has given me a wonderful family and I thank Him for that.

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

A: I see myself involved in the future the way I've been in the past. It is my heart's desire to continue on the way I'm going. ... I see myself as being busy in reaching out to people.

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

A: I pray He will give me the strength and the things I need to live the life that is pleasing to Him.

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

A: He transformed my soul and made me a new creature. ... He brings me contentment and He supplies my every need. I can't begin to tell you what a wonderful Savior I have. I just pray that everyone out there who doesn't know Jesus would come to accept Him and know the joy. 🙏



BP photo

# Church Life

*Part 2 of 3 in a series*

The 'dones' are those Christians who consider themselves faithful to God but are turned off by the institutional aspects of church like an over-concentration on worship services.

## Congregations face challenges as 'dones' become trendy movement in US churches

**Y**ou've met the "nones." Now meet the "dones." Just as churches, seminaries and congregational consultants were wrapping their heads around the concept of the "nones" in religious life yet another term emerges for yet another category of Americans abandoning the church: the "dones."

The first group denotes the growing number of Americans with no religion affiliation. "Nones," which may represent as much as 38 percent of the U.S. population, also are known for generally having had no or very little in the way of religious upbringing.

But sociologists, church historians and congregational coaches have realized for a while that another subset of Americans are answering "none" on surveys about religious affiliations: Those who have grown up in the church and remained active in adulthood — at least until getting tired of church life.

They've been included in other names created by researchers including the "un-churched" and the "de-churched."

### Newer term

They've been the target of evangelistic efforts now and then but the newer term, "dones," captures a fact about them that other monikers didn't: they're finished — and most likely for good.

"There's not a whole lot of hope of them coming back," said Thom Schultz, a Colorado-based blogger and co-author of "Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore."

Schultz posted a blog recently that introduced the term "dones" for those Christians turned off by their church experiences. He said it doesn't mean they are done with God.

"They will tell you they are very faithful, they are strong Christians and are looking for ways to act out on their faith even more so than they did when they were involved" in a congregation, Schultz said.

The term "dones" was inspired by October's "Future of the Church" conference in Loveland, Colo., where sociologist Josh Packard presented research about the growing group of Americans who are abandoning organized Christianity.

"We coined that term here," Schultz said.

While the term is new the trend it represents is not, Baptist and church leadership consultant Mark Tidsworth said.

"I have been hearing and observing this in churches ... for seven or eight years," said Tidsworth, president of Pinnacle Leadership Associates in Chapin, S.C.

It's why Tidsworth said he was one of many to post Schultz's Nov. 12 blog, "The Rise of the Dones," on Facebook. He shared it because there is finally a term to designate a movement that is impacting the church in America.

Having new vocabulary for a shift al-

ready underway will help him and others trying to coach churches through difficult times, Tidsworth said.

"The word 'dones' is language that describes something we have been observing," he said. "When you get language for something, it makes the mental concepts stick."

It's an especially disturbing trend because it involves people who were previously dedicated to and active in congregational life, he said.

Tidsworth said a recent church consultation illustrated how the "dones" are creating challenges for congregations. Members of the church shared their frustration at being unable to recruit new members to a nominating committee.

"It's like pulling teeth to get people to serve in the infrastructure of the church," Tidsworth said, adding that such positions are

a turn off to many young Christians.

Often the "dones" see the red tape associated with church as an obstacle to the Christ-inspired ministry they had hoped to find at church, he said.

The church "is a modern-era institution in a postmodern time," he said, "and people are interested in meaningful and significant engagement and service to the world."

Statistics are scarce on that population

*"We need to look at the people we already have and how we can listen and talk to them and be sure they are not the next 'dones.'"*

**Thom Schultz**  
blogger and author

but they would certainly be contributing to overall declines in worship attendance noticed by polling agencies.

The Pew Research Center found that the percentage of Americans who say they "seldom" or "never" attend religious services rose from 25 percent to 29 percent from 2003 to 2013.

And the 'nones' also are increasing "at a rapid pace," according to Pew.

### Increase in numbers

"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," the organization found.

Those figures include atheists, agnostics and nearly 33 million who have no particular religious affiliation, Pew said.

The latter category may well include those formerly church-going Christians who remain strong in faith.

But Schultz said churches would be wise to let the "dones" go and focus on fixing the issues that led them to quit in the first place.

Congregations must wrestle with what it means to be the church and to find solutions from there, he said.

"We need to look at the people we already have and how we can listen and talk to them and be sure they are not the next 'dones.'"

Many times churches who undergo that process realize their main focus is their Sunday morning worship services, with most resources and energy funneled into that.

"'Dones' are reminding us that that's not the true focus of the church, capital C," Schultz said. (BNG)

*Famous Christians from previous centuries*

# Heroes of the Faith

## Foundation honors namesake on 100-year anniversary of her death

**M**issionary Mary Slessor (1848–1915) was raised in the slums of Dundee, Scotland. She died in a mud hut in Africa. On Jan. 13, 2015, the 100th anniversary of her death, the Mary Slessor Foundation honored her with a bronze plaque in Dundee. She also was remembered in Nigeria.

Born to Robert and Mary Slessor on Dec. 2, 1848, in Gilcomston, Scotland, she was the second of seven children. Her mother was a godly woman but her alcoholic father couldn't make a living as a cobbler.

In 1859 the family moved to Dundee where her parents went to work in a weaving mill. After her father and two brothers died she worked long days in a mill.

She became a Christian at a young age and dreamed of being a missionary

in Africa. Because she was a woman she was discouraged from serving. After hearing about the death of Scottish missionary David Livingstone she applied to the United Presbyterian Church's Foreign Mission Board and trained in Edinburgh, Scotland. She set sail for Africa on Aug. 5, 1876.

She was assigned to the Calabar region in what is now Nigeria. While serving in area towns, she lived in the missionary compound for three years. There she contracted malaria — a disease she dealt with all her life. It required her to return to Scotland several times.

After recovering Slessor moved to Old Town, Nigeria. Witchcraft, cannibalism and superstition were prevalent. Human sacrifice, the ritual murder of twins and the practice of determining guilt by making

suspects drink poison were common. She completely depended on God and succeeded at stopping such practices. Her life, she said, was "one long, daily, hourly record of answered prayer."

She rescued hundreds of twins abandoned in the bush and adopted several as her children. Missions compounds soon were filled with babies.

In 1888 she traveled farther inland to Okoyong, Nigeria, an area where previous missionaries had been killed. For 15 years she lived with the Okoyong and Efik people. She learned their language and made close personal relationships. She lived like them,

eating native food, drinking impure water and going barefoot. She not only spread the gospel but also worked as a nurse, built hospitals and empowered women.

In 1892 she became vice consul in Okoyong, presiding over the native court. She settled disputes, encouraged trade, established social changes and introduced Western education.

In 1904 she moved to Itu, Nigeria, another remote area, going where no white person had been. Because she was known for her work the gospel spread rapidly among the cannibals. In 1905 she was named vice president of Ikot Obong native court.

Toward the end of her life Slessor continued to suffer fevers from malaria. She could no longer walk but had to be pushed along in a handcart.

The "White Queen of Calabar" died Jan. 13, 1915. Government officials, missionaries and crowds of Africans attended her state funeral at Duke Town, Nigeria. She was buried in the land she had sacrificially served for four decades. ☩

**By Joanne Sloan**

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



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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Images of the Church

### The People of God

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

**T**he Old Testament reminds us that in a special sense God chose Israel to be His people. When the fledgling nation was mired in slavery, God's word to Moses was, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt" (Ex. 3:7). Later Moses reminded the generation that was delivered from bondage, "The Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of His own inheritance, as you are this day" (Deut. 4:20). Later generations of Israel learned to sing, "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 100:3).

Just as Israel was God's old covenant people, the Church is His new covenant people. The saving mission of Christ was God's plan "to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14). Addressing God's new covenant people, 1 Peter 2:9-10 declares, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession," before acknowledging the inclusion of Gentiles in the new people of God by invoking the language of the prophet Hosea, "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people."

#### Theology by analogy

During the early part of 2015 we will be thinking about the Church as the new covenant people of God. The goal will be to discover theology by looking at analogies — images, comparisons and illustrations in the Bible that refer to the Church. Somewhat in anticipation of what lies ahead, we encounter among New Testament references to the Church such analogies as body, bride, building, holy nation, family, temple, flock, household, royal priesthood, along with more than a few others.

However, there is a caution to be noted about truth revealed by means of analogy. The same holds true for

truth found by means of parables. The caution is to refrain from pressing all the details of the analogy to the point of seeing ideas that are not supported or clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture. Just as it is possible to press many details in Jesus' parables to the point that one makes the parables yield ideas that become either untruth or questionable truth, so it is possible to find ideas about the Church in the analogies that are not commensurate with clear biblical teachings about being the people of God under the new covenant.

#### God's people

With this caution in mind and in no particular order or pattern, Theology 101 will explore selected images that shed light on what it means to be God's people — the Church. Some analogies are found more frequently or are given greater elaboration than others. These may require multiple sessions on the same image. Other images occur in limited places or with rather brief mention. In these instances only one session may be devoted to an image or maybe more than one image may be discussed in a single session. A good individual assignment might be that as we read the Bible to be on the lookout for various analogies or illustrations used to refer to the people of God.

With these introductory thoughts behind us we will begin next week to consider what some of the analogies contribute to our understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. 🙏

*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.*



# Burning up the road for missions

## East Brow couple committed to ministry

**R**ay and Joanne Clark say they aren't really interested in filling the pew — or the rocking chair. The couple — members of East Brow Community Church, Ider, in Sand Mountain Baptist Association — came to Christ in their 50s and they knew from the get-go that they had no intention of sitting around.

From South Dakota to Brazil the Clarks have spent the last couple of decades burning up the road for missions.

It was a calling they say started with a prod from God — they knew there "must be more to being a Christian besides filling a pew," so they thought they could "perhaps make a difference."

After all it was someone getting out of the pew and reaching into their lives that brought them to Christ so late in life. They had "head knowledge" of God but no active faith and a Christian friend encouraged them to attend church. When they did their "veil of blindness" lifted, Joanne Clark said.

As they grew in their faith they got heavily involved in Ebenezer Baptist Church, Bryant, the church they had begun attending. Both taught Sunday School as well as classes on spiritual gifts. Ray Clark served as men's ministry director and was overseer of the church buildings and grounds while Joanne served as Sunday School and Vacation Bible School director.

They loved serving in their church. But it didn't stop there.

It wasn't long before they were involved at the associational level. Ray Clark became active in Constructors for Christ and spent a lot of time helping director of missions David Patty start Sand Mountain Association's disaster relief teams, a very active ministry today.

Joanne Clark taught Spanish through Samford University's extension program and for missions teams.

Patty described the couple as "friends, missionaries, servants."

"In 2003 they helped me put together our first 'associational' missions trip," Patty said. "They drove down to Laredo, Texas, and ... we went across the border and met with an International Mission Board missionary friend who introduced us to some

pastors. I came back (to Alabama) and got 41 people to volunteer for our first of many missions trips to Nuevo Laredo."

And soon the couple was going themselves.

It started in Mexico and it just kept going.

In 2001 the North American Mission Board commissioned them as Missions Service Corps volunteer missionaries, a program they later became state coordinators of in Alabama.

They followed God's call to Brazil, Arizona and to a Sioux reservation in South Dakota.

And they've filled pulpit after pulpit around the association and state encouraging others to do the same.

#### Inspiring others

It's a passion and commitment that those around them have found inspirational — to the point that Sand Mountain Association recently dedicated its 2014 annual in the couple's honor.

"Thank you, Ray and Joanne, for wanting to make a difference and wanting to do more for our Lord and Savior," the annual read. "Thank you for the time, energy and encouragement you generously and willingly gave and for the sacrifices you have made. Many have been blessed through your giving to the Lord. ... Congratulations on an honor you so richly deserve." (TAB)



RAY & JOANNE CLARK

## 'I ... learned how amazing it is that He shed His blood for us,' Rogers says

(continued from page 1)

God "alone can take you in His arms and wipe all the stains away," she said.

In the years that followed, Rogers grew in her faith and had two more children — another daughter and son. She has traveled frequently, speaking to women through radio and TV stations, extending to them the same hope that met her in her moment of need.

"I want to help other women going through post abortion like I was," she said.



ROGERS

She urges women to get involved in a Bible-based post-abortion study "so that they could come to know that Jesus is the only One that can set them free from this torment."

It's a message that saved her life, Rogers said.

"I am healed and able to forgive myself for murdering my children. I came to know our sweet, precious Savior and learned how amazing it is that

He shed His blood for us."

To contact Rogers, email starrkay-rogers@gmail.com. (TAB)

# 114th CONGRESS

## 'Little change' in religious makeup at Capitol Hill

Republicans took full control of Capitol Hill when the 114th Congress was sworn in Jan. 6, but even with a political shift there was little change in the overall religious makeup of Congress, according to a new analysis from the Pew Research Center.

Here are seven ways the religious makeup of Congress will (and won't) change.

1) More than 9 in 10 members of the House and Senate (92 percent) are Christian; about 57 percent are Protestant while 31 percent are Catholic. The new Congress will include at least seven members who are ordained ministers.

2) Protestants and Catholics continue to be overrepresented as members of Congress. As of 2013, 49 percent of American adults are Protestant and 22 percent are Catholic, according to Pew.

### Religiously unaffiliated

3) The biggest difference between Congress and other Americans is the number of people who say they are religiously unaffiliated. Just 0.2 percent of Congress say they are religiously unaffiliated, compared with 20 percent of the general public. In fact the only member of Congress who publicly identifies herself as religiously unaffiliated is sophomore Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz.

4) Jews continue to have greater representation in Congress (5 percent) than most Americans (2 percent), but there are five fewer Jewish members in the incoming Congress than there were from 2005 to 2006. Of the 301 GOP House and Senate members who were sworn in Jan. 6 only one —

Rep. Lee Zeldin of New York's 1st District — is a Jew. The 113th Congress also had just one Jewish Republican, former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., who lost his primary race in 2014.

5) Many of the nation's smaller religious groups are more proportionally reflective of the American population. Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus combined represent about 2 percent of Americans and 1 percent of Congress.

6) Two-thirds of the Republicans in the incoming Congress (67 percent) are Protestant, about a quarter are Catholic (27 percent) and 5 percent are Mormon.

7) Of the 234 Democrats in the 114th Congress, 44 percent are Protestant, 35 percent are Catholic, 12 percent are Jewish, 1 percent are Mormon, two are Buddhist, two are Muslim, one is Hindu and one does not identify with any particular religion. (RNS)

## Reverse Mortgages to Change

By Jimmy Dixon

Starting March 2, 2015, FHA will require a credit analysis and proof of a certain amount of income for anyone applying for a reverse mortgage. They've been talking about this for some time and now will drop the ax very soon.

I plan to give you more details after the lenders study and discuss the 78-page memorandum and issue their policies on compliance.

Meanwhile, if you or someone you know is considering a reverse mortgage, you may want to encourage them to think about applying before March 2 to avoid the added paperwork and scrutiny.

In FHA's defense, they are implementing these changes to make sure seniors are able to pay for their homeowner's insurance and property taxes. By the way, all lenders of mortgages require homeowner's insurance.

Remember, like The Alabama Baptist, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.

For a free brochure, quote or discussion, call him direct at 205-567-4800 or email [jdixon@mcgowinking.com](mailto:jdixon@mcgowinking.com).



Jimmy Dixon



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## Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

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### Former national WMU executive director dies

BIRMINGHAM — Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, who served as executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) from 1974 to 1989, died Jan. 2.



CRUMPLER

Crumpler earned a master's degree in religious education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and began her career with WMU in 1958, working with Girls in Action through Florida WMU and in Alabama as WMU promotion director before becoming chief executive of national WMU.

Starting in 1980 she served on the Baptist World Alliance's (BWA) General Council and became chairman of the BWA Committee in 1985.

When she became president of the New Orleans Seminary National Alumni Association (1984-85) she became the first woman to chair a Southern Baptist seminary's alumni association (other than the WMU Training School).

Crumpler is survived by her husband, Joe, and a host of family members.

### Missouri Convention receives \$5 million settlement

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — The Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC) has received a \$5 million partial settlement in its legal efforts to restore the Missouri Baptist Foundation as an entity accountable to the convention.

The foundation was one of five subsidiary corporations which broke from the convention from 2000 to 2001, changing their charters to create self-perpetuating trustee boards.

The MBC Executive Board approved a \$5 million payment from Church Mutual Insurance Company in an executive session during its Dec. 8-9, 2014, meeting in Jefferson City, Mo. The settlement with Church Mutual is to be applied toward financial losses and attorney's fees accrued by the convention.

The company remitted the \$5 million payment to the convention Jan. 6.

### Deal between FBC Nashville, hotel developer fails

NASHVILLE — No one speaking to the press reportedly understands why a proposed deal has fallen through between First Baptist Church, Nashville, and a developer of a hotel project.

Neither side could explain why the multimillion-dollar deal for the 1.26-acre downtown parking lot wasn't finalized, according to the *Nashville Business Journal*. Both sides also expressed disappointment.

The *Journal* also reported that failed real estate deals have been par for the course for the congregation located in the middle of "white hot" commercial development in downtown Nashville. ☞

## Ministry Tips

### CARING FOR A LARGE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

By Terry Newberry

NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville

I teach a relatively large class at our church. One of the questions I often hear is, "How do you minister to everyone?" It is an age-old question.

In Exodus 18, Jethro came to see Moses in the desert. He noticed

that everyone came to Moses to seek his wisdom. Moses was spending all day doing this. Jethro told Moses he was wearing himself out trying to accomplish such a large task alone. He advised him to select capable men and appoint them as leaders.

That's our model. We have care leaders at our church, each of whom care for five couples. Then there are ministry leaders

who each have five care leaders assigned to them. We have leaders in place for communication, prayer, class fellowships and so on.

### Chain of communication

When there is an illness, loss or other need in a group, that care leader lets their ministry leader know and they in turn

work with the other leaders to get the word out to everyone. Our communication team makes sure to let me know of these so I can call or visit.

The goal is to ensure the class, though large, always feels a sense of closeness and love for one another. ☞



## Want to know GOD?

**Pastor Michael B. Oliver**  
Trinity Baptist Church, Madison

On a missions trip to the Dominican Republic I preached at the dedication of a church. Pastor Ramon graciously asked me to bring the message in his beautiful new church. His son, Jonathan, was the interpreter. I kept hearing people saying something that sounded like “Glory, Goodbye” — it sounded like “Gloria Adios.” I was confused but kept preaching. Then it dawned on me. They were saying “Glory to God.” They were shouting “Gloria a Dios.”

Those shouts of hope came from people who had much less than I do materially. However, their hearts and lives were full of meaning and thanksgiving for who God is.

I remember that God saves us and enters into a relationship with us for a reason. We are assured a place in heaven when our time in this world is done. Whether we live in nice houses or if we have no roof at all, Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). The Christian hope of heaven is real when we accept Christ as our Savior. However, God is not only for way off in the future. God is for us today. When we pray for forgiveness of our sins and accept Christ in our hearts, our lives change. We are given a purpose in life. We are given the task of sharing the gospel, the good news of God, with others in our world. In short we are to become good-news people. Whether we are preaching behind a pulpit or telling a neighbor about God, we all have a purpose. We may not shout “Glory to God” with our lips but God will use us to continue the work of bringing all peoples, races and nations together to God.

When we say “yes” to God we become part of the great congregation of God’s people that transcends all boundaries of humanity. When you accept Christ you become a good-news person. Whatever your language or background you have a part to play in His mission. Our very lives will shout “Glory to God.”

# ‘Great benefit’

## UMobile to begin marketplace ministry online degree program

The University of Mobile (UMobile) is enrolling adult students for a new fully online degree program, the bachelor of science in marketplace ministry.

Classes open Jan. 19 for the program, which marks the entry into online college degrees offered by the Baptist university founded in 1961 in Mobile.

New students may enroll at various times throughout the year, since classes are offered in a flexible eight-week format designed to meet the scheduling needs of working adults, according to Danny Chancey, director of adult and professional studies. He said the

program is for those age 23 and older who are starting or continuing a college degree.

“We have 22 years of experience in adult education, and that is a great benefit as we expand our program to offer more online degrees that are flexible, affordable and faith-based,” Chancey said.

### Courses in ministry

The new degree includes courses in ministry, leadership and counseling. It prepares graduates for Christian leadership in ministry, social and secular work, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, and careers as a church pastor, urban ministry leader, and

corporate or industry chaplain, Chancey said.

“For many adults earning a college degree may open doors to advancing at their place of employment or in changing careers,” Chancey said.

UMobile also offers on-campus bachelor degree programs for adults including the bachelor of business administration, bachelor of science in leadership and cultural studies, bachelor of science

in elementary or early childhood education and the RN to BSN program for registered nurses working toward a bachelor of science in nursing.

For information about UMobile’s online program, call an enrollment counselor at 855-230-0804 or visit LearnOnline.UMobile.edu. Additional upcoming sessions in 2015 will begin March 18, May 13, July 8, Sept. 2 and Oct. 28. (UMobile)

## LETTERS



(continued from page 2)  
ers in their suffering. Generosity and service are ways that compassion can be demonstrated. We can be sympathetic to someone under stress. Maybe they lost their job and we might be able to alleviate that stress by some type of assistance. It is allowed to help others without expecting rewards. There is always someone out there who is less fortunate.

I once read somewhere that “kindness gives birth to kindness.” Someone else said: “Be nice to people on your way up because you’ll meet them on your way down.”

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibet who continues to speak of forgiveness, justice and living together in harmony.

Mother Teresa worked in the slums of Calcutta, India, helping and nursing the poor and sick. She had a great reverence for human life. So many dedicated people in the past have given their all to help others with the same compassion we’re talking about today. When do we begin?

What would be wrong with us as Christians, if we started today, looking for ways to help in any situation without being asked? Send a card, make a phone call, send flowers or be brave and just visit.

Jake Cannon  
Dothan, Ala. ☞

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**SENIOR PASTOR:** Bellevue Baptist Church in Gadsden, Ala., is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Interested parties please send resumé to: jmc@copelaw.com or mail to: Bellevue Baptist Church, 150 Nocalula Drive, Gadsden, AL 35904. Church website: www.bbcgadsden.com.

**PASTOR:** Brent Baptist Church is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Cut-off date is Feb. 4. Please send resumés to: Brent Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 246, Brent, AL 35043. No electronic resumés will be accepted. Please visit www.brentbaptistchurch.org for more information.

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR:** Shady Grove Baptist Church is currently seeking a bivocational pastor. Located about 10 miles from Selma and 35 miles from Prattville in Dallas County. We are a Southern Baptist congregation. Average worship attendance is 40. Please send resumé to: michelle.adams@paper.com or Michelle Adams, 234 Co. Rd. 83 Selma, AL 36703. Contact number: 334-874-3905.

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

**BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER:** Bivocational music minister for Siluria Baptist Church in Alabaster. Send resumé to: 10696 Highway 119 South, Alabaster, AL 35007 or by email to: siluriabaptist@gmail.com.

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

**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 resumés via email to: james@concordbaptist.com or to: Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621, ATTN: Dr. Don Cox. Church website: concordbaptist.com.

**BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER:** West Highland Baptist Church in Athens, Ala., is seeking a bivocational youth minister. Please send resumé to: ATTN: Youth Minister Search Committee, WHBC, 1013 5th Avenue, Athens, AL 35611.

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# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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## BIRMINGHAM

► **Brad Gowing** is the new discipleship pastor for **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**. Gowing's first role at Dawson began in 2004 as the associate minister of recreation. He later served First Church, Dothan, and First Church, Pensacola, Fla., before returning to Dawson in 2011 as minister of recreation and later college students in 2013. He earned a bachelor's degree from Samford Uni-



**GOWING**

versity in Birmingham and a master of arts in Christian education from New Orleans Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Maile, have two children. His new role began Jan. 1. **Tommy Lunceford** is the new minister of recreation for Dawson. He and his wife, Karee, have served in ministry for more than 30 years, serving for 19 years at Hickory Grove Church, Charlotte, N.C. He earned a bachelor's degree from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a master of arts in religious education from Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife have two children. His new role will begin Jan. 25. Gary Fenton is pastor.



**LUNCEFORD**

## BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold

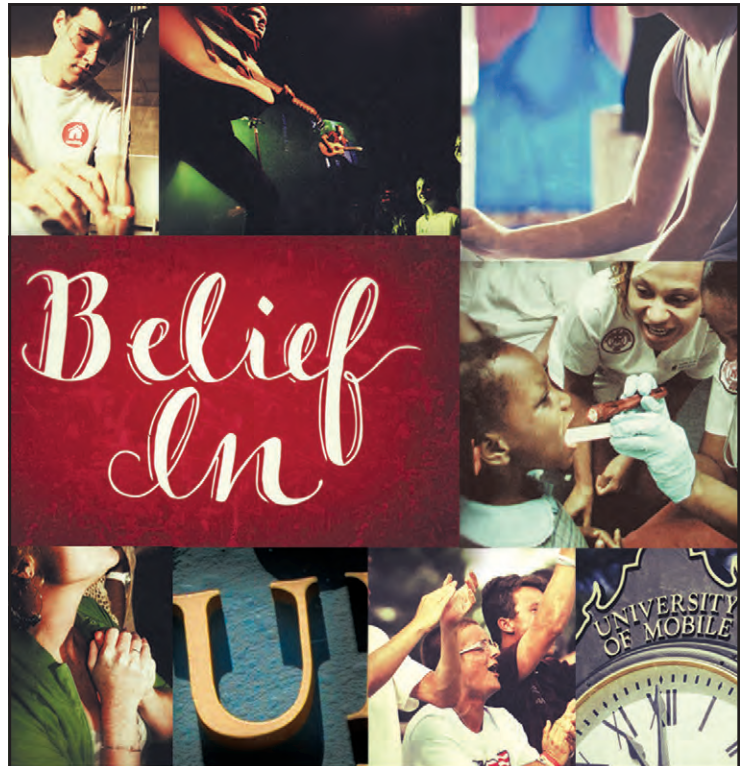
its regular Sunday night singing Jan. 18, 6 p.m. with Strait Way Quartet of Cullman. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

## CALHOUN

► **Westwood Church, Alexandria**, will host its annual Global Impact Celebration. "Live Life As One Sent" will be Jan. 25 with missionaries speaking at 9 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon. A missions fair will be held 1 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. followed by missionaries sharing their call to missions at 5 p.m. For more information call 256-820-2211. Rodney Clingan is pastor.

## MADISON

► **Mable Hill Church, Ardmore**, held a benefit concert Jan. 11 to raise money for the food pantry Christians Helping Others of Ardmore. Compassion Trio performed, along with Mable Hill's Expressive worship team and Good News Boys. The concert was held at Ardmore community center. Mike Clark is pastor. ☪



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# Making an eternal difference

## Summer camp provides opportunities for physical, spiritual growth

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's pretty easy to tell the difference between experienced summer campers and newbies in the camp registration line. Those who have been to camp before eagerly talk about which activities they plan to choose and which cabins are closest to the dining hall. First-time campers are quieter, listening to the others and wondering how camp life will be.

By the end of camp, however, the excited chatter makes it almost impossible to tell the difference between first-timers and old-timers and that is just how camp directors and counselors like it.

"Camp is an opportunity for campers to learn a little bit about themselves," said Elizabeth Cook, recreation manager at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. "It's a time for campers to get out of their normal routine and away from the distractions of the world for a few days

and have a time of reflection and growth."

In a world full of schedules and distractions unplugging can be challenging, according to Gregg Hunter, president and CEO of Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA).

In his article "Rx for 'The Overprotected Kid': Good-Old Fashioned Camp," Hunter writes that "the average American youth spends 82 minutes per day on the phone, 80 minutes playing games and 27 minutes on a computer — nearly three hours a day with electronics — yet only four minutes outside."

Camp offers much more than an escape from technology, however, according to Hunter.

"For a period of usually a week, around 10,000 minutes, campers escape their en-



Photo courtesy of WorldSong Missions Place

WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs

*"Our specific goal is to include discussions about missions service and church vocation."*

Steve Stephens  
state director, Alabama Baptist Boys Camps

vironment, decompress and re-assess their lives without distraction, and experience actual adventures in a natural setting. They form new relationships with brand-new peers and caring, adult role models from other places and backgrounds — a temporary community where they can take risks and ask, even answer, life's most important questions."

At Christian camps, those important questions tend to be spiritual ones and many former campers point to camp as the place they were first called to repentance or Christian service.

Steve Stephens, state director of Ala-

bama Baptist Boys Camps and an associate in the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said leading young people toward deeper spiritual reflection is certainly a goal of a Christian camp.

### Spiritual reflection

"At our boys and girls camps our specific goal is to include discussions about missions service and church vocation," Stephens said. "We want them to learn that there are places out there to see and things to experience. We give them more time to think about who they really are and what God might be calling them to do."

That's what happened to Kaley Stephens, a former missionary kid who now serves as the program and activities director at WorldSong Missions Place. After serving at WorldSong summer camps Kaley (See 'The Lord,' page 13)





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# Investing in **lives**

## Summer staffers see missions opportunities

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

**O**n Aug. 27, 2014, Kaley Stephens, program and activities director at WorldSong Missions Place, posted to the organization's blog, The WorldSong Globe, about a conversation she shared with a young camper.

Stephens asked the boy what he thought was the best part of camp. When he said "the cabin," Stephens was "completely confused."

"Was it the bunk beds, the AC

or the new carpet in Azelea? Out of all the things at camp, how could the cabin be the best part? He took a moment to collect himself, 'We just have SO. MUCH. FUN. ... ALL. THE. TIME.'

### Dedicated work

Ask most campers what they remember about summer camp and they also will tell you how much fun they had. All that fun is the result of months of planning and hard work by summer camp staff, who are a vital part of the ministry of summer camps around the state.

Camp staffers, usually college

students or high school juniors and seniors, are dedicated to helping young campers grow closer to Christ. Stephens calls their work an "investment" in the lives of young people.

"My favorite part about working at WorldSong is all the relationships we build here," Stephens said. "At the end of the day when you have campers come up to you and say, 'On the zip line today I learned how to trust God,' or 'At culture camp today I decided I want to be a missionary when I grow up' — that's what makes our job so incredible."

Summer staffers at Alabama Baptist camps and retreat centers take on different responsibilities during the weeks of summer camps and each experience is unique to the needs of the location.

At Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, for example, summer staffers work in many different areas. Some are assigned to recreation supervision duties while others work in the kitchen or at the front desk. The 10-week positions are minimum wage jobs that come with free room and board, according to Elizabeth Cook, recreation man-



Photo courtesy of Camp Lee  
**Camp Lee in Anniston**

ager and summer staff supervisor at Shocco.

"Our summer staff makes things happen that campers don't even know is happening," Cook said. "While they work they are praying for the people who spend time here, so it's a ministry that people don't see but that is important nonetheless."

### Summer fun

Outside of their work hours there are opportunities for staff members to have fun as well.

Cook said summer staffers have one night of recreation each week where groups go bowling, watch movies or participate in activities like the ropes course. Staffers also have small group Bible studies and worship one night each week.

"The planned activities are what makes our program more of a camp experience," Cook said.

Shocco summer staff members also have the opportunity to participate in local missions trips

throughout the summer, often going to other camps to help staffers there.

In 2014 for example Shocco staffers went to Mobile Baptist Association's Camp Whispering Pines in Citronelle and took over housekeeping, food service and recreation duties there for a day so the summer staffers there could have a break.

The local missions trips are offered at no cost to summer staffers and are a fun way to get away from work for a few days and focus on missions, Cook said. For the college students who work at Shocco an international missions trip to Haiti also is offered, though students have to raise support for the trip. Providing opportunities for service is what distinguishes a summer camp job from other summer jobs, Cook said.

"Summer staff work is a great opportunity for students who want to get away and do something different for the summer," she said. ☞

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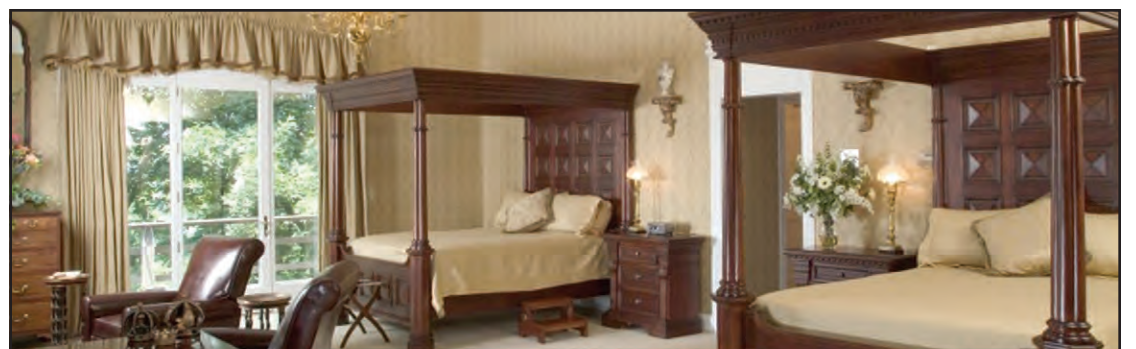
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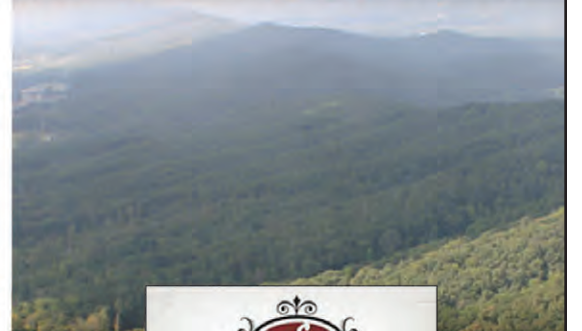
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SPOTLIGHT ON  
**CHRISTIAN CAMPS**

# 'The Lord uses summer camp to change lives,' Cowart says

(continued from page 11)  
changed her college major to recreation leadership. Now she works alongside her mother, Hope, camp director at WorldSong, to lead camps and programs for groups of all ages.

The Stephenses hope World-Song campers regardless of age or background will leave camp with a better understanding of God's plan and purpose for their lives.

"My hope is that campers would walk away knowing that the Great Commission is something that starts right here. Becoming a missionary isn't something you do when you grow up and it's not something that only takes place far away — it starts here and now, right where you are," Hope Stephenses said in an interview with *The Alabama Baptist* in April 2014 (see "WorldSong Missions Place welcomes new mother-daughter staff leaders" in the April 17 issue).

Of course, fun is a big part of summer camp and Christian

camps offer lots of activities to keep campers physically active and entertained. Though campers come from a diverse background, camp is a place where they experience new things, said Steve Stephenses. At Boys Camp for example boys get to cook on a campfire, shoot air rifles and throw hatchets — activities most boys don't get to do every day.

## New experiences

"So whether they live downtown or out in the country the boys get to do things that they probably wouldn't do anywhere else," he said.

Other activities include art, drama, canoeing, archery, swimming

and ropes courses, all of which give campers the opportunity to both identify their natural gifts and push their personal limits.

Phil Robeson, director of the Marshall Baptist Retreat Center, said, "Especially on our challenge adventure course, we stress communication, cooperation, trust and fun. They have to work as a team to accomplish some of these goals and as they work together leaders will come to the forefront."

Often those leaders who step up have never had an opportunity to use those skills, Cook said.

"With activities like the ropes course campers see what kind of leadership skills they have, some-

times skills they're not using," she said. "Then we talk about how what we learn in recreation applies to our spiritual lives. What does it really mean to put these lessons into action once you get away from this retreat? We get to have great conversations and see doors to further conversations opening, all coming out of what we do during recreation."

Though the activities are the same, what each individual camper takes away from the camp experience is different and valuable, said Lauren Cowart, guest relations manager at Shocco. No camper leaves unchanged, however, and many make commitments to Christ or to Christian service.

Last summer at Shocco more than 15,000 people, mostly youth and children, came to camp and more than 1,000 of those campers made decisions for Christ, Cowart said. Making an eternal difference in the lives of young people is what camp is all about.

## Changing lives

"For some, camp will be the best week of their summer or even their year. Camp gets kids out of their normal environment and gives them an opportunity to hear what the Lord has to say. All those decisions are a good indication of how the Lord uses summer camp to change lives," Cowart said. ☞

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 18

## Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

### PROTECT HUMAN LIFE

For 41 years it has been legal for a woman to end the life of her unborn child in the United States. Support for euthanasia is gaining momentum throughout the country. Mobs are rallying and some are celebrating the murder of police officers as a result of unpopular decisions by civil servants. Revenge has replaced justice and personal rights are granted, so it seems, by the media and/or the government rather than by God.

This week's lesson is topical rather than expository, focusing on selected Scripture passages relating to the sanctity of human life. The passages may seem random but they each focus on God's glory and human responsibility.

As a foundation we must begin in Genesis 1 where God created humanity to reflect His image and for His glory. Once His crowning achievement was complete, God declared the whole of His material universe was very good. God's creation declares His glory.

#### Part of Our Purpose (Gen. 9:1-7)

God is the Author of life. As part of God's plan for humanity a relationship with Him brings both blessing and curse. When we walk in covenant relationship with Him through obedience we experience His blessings. On the other hand when we break covenant with Him and walk in rebellion we invite His wrath and the curse of death.

Genesis 9 begins with a reaffirmation of God's initial blessing on humanity in Genesis 1:28. Following the flood animals developed a fear of humans, in part because of the change in man's diet. Instead of just fruits and vegetables (Gen. 1:29) Noah and his family were granted permission to eat any animal as long as the blood did not remain in it (9:3-4).

In addition the death sentence was clarified by God. Initially God told Adam that disobedience led to death: "On the day you eat from [the fruit of the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil] you will certainly die" (Gen. 2:17). After the flood God gave human beings the function of protecting human life by carrying out a death penalty: "His blood will be shed by man for God made man in His image" (9:6). Anyone who killed a human being would be put to death by a human representative of God. The apostle Paul added, "If you do wrong, be afraid because [government] does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong" (Rom. 13:4).

#### Valued in His Creation (Ps. 8:4-8)

Psalm 8 begins and ends with a declaration of the magnificence of God who is Yahweh (Lord), covenant God of Israel, and Adonai (Lord), meaning "master." His splendor is demonstrated by His creation where humanity holds prominence among the creatures of the earth. David wonders aloud why man holds such a position when compared to the vast expanse of the universe. "You made him little less than God [Elohim] and crowned him with glory and honor" (8:4). God has entrusted the welfare of His creation to us. We have a responsibility to do what He has called each of us to do in utilizing and protecting His world.

#### Called to Action (Prov. 24:10-12; Phil. 2:12-16)

Today's believers have information about almost everything at their fingertips. After more than 40 years and more than 55 million Americans put to death legally by means of abortion, no one can claim ignorance about abortion. The facts are available for everyone to see. As Solomon wrote, "If you say, 'But we didn't know about this,' won't He who weighs the hearts consider it?"

Paul challenges followers of Christ to shine as stars in the darkness. In a world bent on murdering the innocents and acquitting the guilty let us proclaim boldly that Jesus has taken our death sentence upon Himself. ☞

## Bible Studies for Life By Kevin Blackwell, D.Min. Assistant to the President for Church Relations, Samford University

### READY WHEN INJUSTICE PREVAILS EXODUS 23:1-3, 6-9

The context of this passage is the handing down of the law to Israel on Mount Sinai. God enters into a covenant agreement with His people and chapters 19-32 mostly deal with the terms of the covenant or God's expectations for His people. On Jan. 18 churches all over the world are taking part in Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. The passage for this week is a timely message that speaks to the sanctity of human life. Though our society debates important life issues and as we have politicized the pro-choice/pro-life views, God never wavers on His view of human life. The Bible is clear as to God's view of taking the life of the innocent. The ultimate injustice is the taking of an innocent life. These verses will speak to these issues.

#### Let your words and actions work for justice, not against it. (1-3)

The justice in the American courts and the justice of God are not always the same. The best definition of biblical justice is "treating all people with fairness and dignity." God clearly communicates to His people His expectations for fair court proceedings so that no innocent person is deemed guilty.

Verse 1 reiterates the 9th commandment. It is wrong to give and promote unfounded gossip against another person. The term "false" here is specific to unfounded, vain or fruitless hearsay. These rules are sometimes neglected in our American justice system. Even if the "crowd" or "many" speak lies the believer should refrain from following the majority and stand for what he or she knows is right. We are not to be swayed by the loud voices that cry out especially if they are asking for unbiblical or ungodly injustice. Christians are to stand against the will of the majority when it is wrong. Being in the minority is not always a bad thing.

#### Work on behalf of the innocent. (6-7)

A person's economic status should not

limit his or her right to receive fair justice. The ability to hire a big time lawyer should not determine whether or not a person is guilty or innocent. Some suggest these verses are speaking specifically to the judges of Israel where the other verses are speaking generally to all Jews.

In light of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, verse 7 is worth noting. "Do not kill the innocent or just." This is a clear commandment from the Lord. While this section contextually deals with court proceedings, certainly the command can be applied to all situations. God always stands with the innocent. No one is more innocent than the baby in the womb. When it comes to any form of taking an innocent life Christians ought to stay "far away."

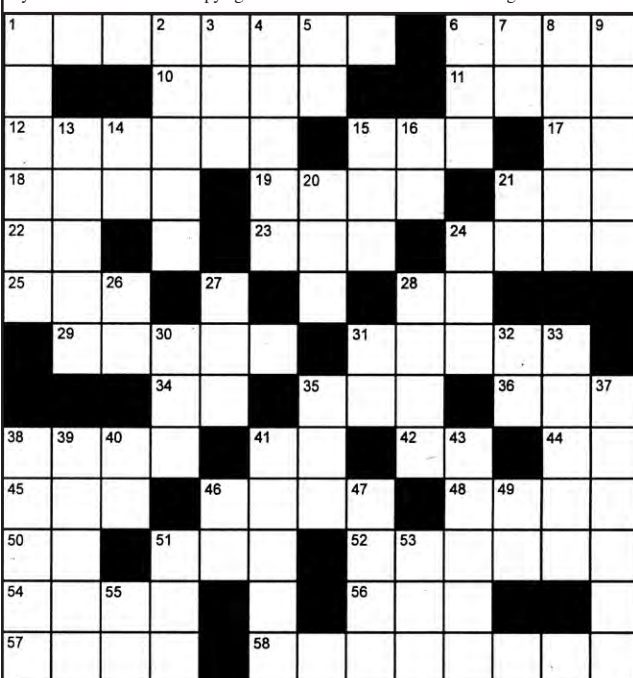
Also notice God's words to those who take the life of the innocent, "I will not justify the guilty." The final justice will always belong to God. The wicked will be brought to account before Yahweh.

#### Don't oppress or hold anyone down. (8-9)

The word for "bribe" appears first in the Hebrew sentence construction for the purpose of emphasis. Verse 8 seems to have taken on the status of a proverb later on in Israel (Deut. 16:19). The consequences of bribery are clear: it "blinds" and "corrupts." The verb forms reflect acts that often are repeated. Bribes are serious offenses in the eyes of God especially when they condemn the innocent or oppress the weak. Verse 9 already has been stated in Psalm 22:21 but is repeated here for emphasis in context of legal proceedings. The fact that it is stated twice gives strong indication of God's prevailing view on welcoming and treating fairly those who are foreigners to your land. Regardless of your views on immigration policies one thing is clear — God sees everyone as in need of His love. Christians ought to take time to minister to those who God puts in our path regardless of their nationality. ☞

## Christian Crossword

By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

- That he might \_\_\_ us alive. (Deut. 6:24)
- Pitcher.
- \_\_\_, which was the son of Seth. (Luke 3:38)
- River in Bolivia.
- Property agency.
- O.T. book. (abbr.)
- Naval vessel designation.
- Candacia Indian.
- Where is \_\_\_ thy brother? (Gen. 4:9)
- Till he should pay all that was \_\_\_ unto him. (Matt. 18:34)
- Comes after em.
- Celtic sea god.
- Right to property.
- Fr. article
- Yes. (Spanish)
- A word appearing in Psalms 73 times.
- Woman's title.
- They could not enter \_\_\_ because of unbelief. (Heb. 3:19)
- Minister's title.
- Missing in Action.
- Top of the head.

- Academic degree.
- Printer's measure.
- Symbol for element Tellurium.
- Japanese sash.
- Became captain over a \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Kings 11:24)
- Put him to an \_\_\_ shame. (Heb. 6:6)
- Northwest state. (abbr.)
- According to the prince of the power of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Eph. 2:2)
- Now therefore \_\_\_ thyself what word I shall bring. (1 Chron. 21:12)
- Full of \_\_\_, murder, debate. (Rom. 1:29)
- As the loving hind and pleasant \_\_\_\_\_. (Prov. 5:19)
- Sendeth \_\_\_ on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
- Solomon reigned over all \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Kings 4:21)
- In a \_\_\_ of ground which Jacob bought. (Josh. 24:32)
- But \_\_\_ died without children. (1 Chron. 2:30)
- Within. (comb form)
- If ye fulfill the \_\_\_ law. (James 2:8)
- Competing against.
- Wane.
- Us.
- Let him seek peace, and \_\_\_ it. (1 Pet. 3:11)
- If ye then be \_\_\_ with Christ. (Col. 3:1)
- Sea eagles.
- \_\_\_, \_\_\_, I, O, U.
- Possessive pronoun.
- \_\_\_ Haig.
- Egyptian pleasure god.
- Double. (prefix)
- Top.
- Compass point.
- \_\_\_ shall be a serpent by the way (Gen. 49:17)
- Can faith \_\_\_ him? (James 2:14)
- Eternal life, which God, that cannot \_\_\_\_\_. (Titus 1:2)
- Northeast state.
- I \_\_\_ Alpha and Omega.
- A certain poor widow, threw in two \_\_\_\_\_. (Mark 12:42)
- His father saw him ... and \_\_\_ and fell on his

- neck. (Luke 16:20)
- He found a certain man named \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 9:33)
- Ye shall receive \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 1:8)
- Are not \_\_\_ and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better? (2 Kings 5:12)
- Musical note.
- And Deborah said unto \_\_\_, Up; for this is the day. (Judges 4:14)
- All the city was \_\_\_ about them. (Ruth 1:19)
- Occurring in intervals of two.
- Mend socks.
- Greek "P."
- \_\_\_ Rand.
- Beware of \_\_\_s. (Phil 3:2)
- Roman numeral six.



**MUSIC**

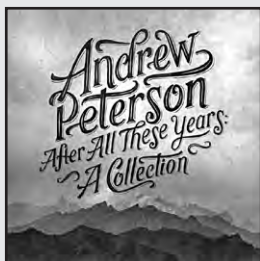
**Media   **  
**reviews**

**Andrew Peterson**

*After All These Years: A Collection*  
Centricity Music

Andrew Peterson is not your average Christian artist. His songs are deeply, almost painfully personal, probing his personal fears and doubts, opening up his psyche for all to see. And as you might guess his angst closely mirrors our own. You want to get in touch with yourself? Put on any one of Peterson's records and hang on.

"After All These Years: A Collection" is a 20-song retrospective of Peterson's 15 years as a songwriter and performer. Eight of our favorite songs have been re-recorded and six songs are included from the original recordings. There are four new songs on the album. Two bonus tracks that wouldn't fit on the CD are available on the digital version. This is not your typical "greatest hits" type of record pushed by the label. This is a true gift to Peterson's fans.



If you're not a Peterson fan, this retrospective is the perfect vehicle to acquaint you with one of the premier musical and lyrical poets of our time. If you are a fan (like me), you'll certainly want to get the record for the new songs and the re-imagined, re-recorded standards. Either way this is a recording you should add to your collection. It's easily one of the best CDs of 2014.

**Lindsay McCaul**

*One More Step*  
Centricity Music

"One More Step," Lindsay McCaul's second record and her first for Centricity Music, shows a lot more maturity than many sophomore efforts, no doubt buoyed by her extensive touring with artists like Casting Crowns, Matthew West, Sanctus Real, The Afters, Brandon Heath and Mandisa.



Thematically the opening song "Empty Handed" sets the tone for the record, reminding us that our own weakness and indecision can sometimes lead us to a better understanding of God's plan for us. One of the most touching songs is "One More Step," written by McCaul during the loss of her father. Emotive strings and a piano, along with McCaul's honest lyrics, create a very personal picture of father and daughter. The song finishes simply, reminding us that the end of this life is only the beginning. Another standout is "Jesus Be," a prayer asking God to be our everything.

There probably aren't any blockbuster hits on this new project but this is a very satisfying record and McCaul's strong voice lifts the album. 🎵

There probably aren't any blockbuster hits on this new project but this is a very satisfying record and McCaul's strong voice lifts the album. 🎵

**Meet the reviewer**

*Rick Sharp writes music reviews for The Alabama Baptist. He is a writer and musician and a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, where he plays guitar in the praise band.*



[Rick@kingdomresearch.org](mailto:Rick@kingdomresearch.org)

*"If people are struggling or searching for answers about their purpose in life there is beauty in the clinging to the simple truth that Jesus loves them."*

**Chris Tomlin**  
Singer/songwriter



Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

**High calling**

**Most sung artist in the world connects audiences to Christ**

**By Leann Callaway**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**W**ith more than 40 million people singing his songs each week, Chris Tomlin realizes the huge responsibility that comes along with his high calling.

Rather than seeing himself as a performer, Tomlin views his role as a "lead worshipper" — a position he fills regularly at Passion City Church, Atlanta.

"I feel a responsibility to use the talent and gift that God has given me to connect people with Him and give them a voice to worship Him," Tomlin said.

After the birth of his second daughter, Tomlin said he gained a deeper understanding of God's unconditional love, which is reflected in his recent songwriting and has increased his desire to connect audiences with life-changing truths.

Although Tomlin now is considered the most sung artist in the world and has received numerous honors he has stayed true to his humble beginnings and his commitment to share the gospel through music.

Tomlin hopes the songs on his 10th album, "Love Ran Red," will draw people closer to the

Lord as they reflect and respond to the message behind the music.

"I hope this album is filled with songs that will help people engage in worship and will help put these truths in their hearts," Tomlin said. "That's what songwriting has always been about for me. It's never been about the production or packaging. It's always been about the core of the song. The journey that I've been on with these worship songs is continuing with this record."

"The title of the new album is just three simple words but it's a profound picture of the gospel. It represents the blood of Jesus that washes us clean. The cross is everything to us and the only way we could approach God in worship. I think the title is also a conversation starter for people who might see the record on a shelf or come across it on iTunes."

"I'm praying especially for the people who will pick up the record and have yet to realize the closeness and power of the gospel. I hope when they

listen to these songs and hear these truths about the greatness and grace of God that it stirs within their heart and causes them to begin to grasp the majesty and the intimacy of God. If people are struggling or searching for answers about their purpose in life there is beauty in the clinging to the simple truth that Jesus loves them." 🎵





IMB photo by Chris Carter

Joe Murphy walks through tomato fields in California. He is thankful for the lessons in life, business and faith he learned from his father, Francis.

# Passionate giver

## Family carries on Texas businessman's giving legacy

**F**rancis Murphy understood something important: Most people like tomatoes, in some form. They like them on hamburgers, in salads and with tacos. Whole, sliced or chunked, people want tomatoes and Francis learned how to provide them year-round.

Working beside his father, Oscar P. Murphy, who started the family-owned tomato distribution business in Houston, Texas, Francis made his living in tomatoes — a lot of tomatoes. He helped build Murphy Tomatoes into a multimillion dollar company with operations in Texas, Florida and California.

### Estate gift

A devout Southern Baptist, Francis gave generously throughout his life to the International Mission Board (IMB) and global missions efforts. After his death in 2010, IMB received a gift from his estate finalized in 2013 of more than \$5.3 million for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the largest estate gift in the organization's history. The gift supports missionaries around the world and their ministries among people who have previously been without access to the gospel.

Anne Murphy, Francis' widow, was not surprised by her husband's generous plans for his estate. He often would tell Anne, "I wish I had more to give," speaking not only of money, but of his time, energy and prayers.

"He just didn't want for himself," Anne said, from her Salinas, Calif., home. "God gave and Francis gave. Francis didn't want or need."

Anne faithfully carried out her husband's handwritten wishes. On a memo pad with "Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths" printed at the top, Francis made his priorities clear. He would make sure people heard the truth of Christ, even after his death.

As a young Christian, Anne didn't always understand the motivation behind her husband's financial giving, but she trusted his wisdom. Francis lived life generously and obediently to the Lord. Even as his wealth accumulated, Anne said he looked for the good he could do with it. Part of his daily time with God included asking how he should invest and spend his money.

Anne learned to love Francis' spirit, which was quick to respond to the needs around him. He regularly offered wise counsel or a good book he had finished reading to church members, family and employees.

A member of Friendswood Baptist Church, Friendswood, Texas, Francis not only was a faithful tither and supporter of global missions, but he did not hesitate to write a check to benefit everything from ministry to widows to disaster relief efforts along the Gulf Coast.

"I wish I had the words to describe this man that God somehow brought before me," Anne said. "He showed me how to live."

Francis' son, Joe, the current owner of Murphy Tomatoes, said his dad looked for ways to bless others when the business became successful and he passed on that desire.

### Conscientious contributor

"We've been very blessed," Joe said. "My dad was very blessed, very prosperous in the business.

"He was very conscientious about the decisions he made in business, but it wasn't only about the money," Joe explained. "It was a passion that God gave him the ability to generate those revenues and to make those profits so that he could bless other people ... and then to have a big contribution that he could make at the end of his life. I think that was really what he worked for."

To view a video of the Murphys, visit [vimeo.com/99869712](http://vimeo.com/99869712) and [vimeo.com/99869713](http://vimeo.com/99869713). (BP)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Armed men abduct 13 Christians in Libya

SIRTE, Libya — In the most recent of a series of kidnappings and killings targeting Egyptian Christians in Libya, 13 Christians in the country were abducted Jan. 3.

A group of armed men thought to be members of an Islamic militia group burst into a housing complex in Sirte, Libya, at about 2 a.m. and abducted the 13 men.

Though there were conflicting reports of how the 13 were chosen they were all Christians.

All the victims in the most recent kidnapping were closely related and came from Samalout in Minya Governorate Egypt.

The kidnapping was the third act of violence against Egyptian Christians in Sirte in less than two weeks. On Dec. 30, 2014, seven Christians were kidnapped while driving back to Egypt through Sirte. On Dec. 23 a Coptic doctor and his wife were shot to death at their home in the city. Their teenage daughter was kidnapped from the home. Her body was found in the desert west of the city two days later.

### African Shamans injure Christians in Uganda

KISABA, Uganda — African shamans wielding clubs and stones stormed a church on a Ugandan island in Lake Victoria on Dec. 22, 2014, sending about 30 Christians to hospitals for treatment, the pastor said.

Pastor Sarah Kalaja of Kisaba Prayer Palace Christian Church on Bukasa Island, said the Shamans destroyed dozens of Bibles and broke chairs, doors, the front part of the building and other property as church members who were not injured fled for their lives.

"My members were beaten with sticks and clubs. Police arrived to rescue the church members who were rushed to nearby clinics," Kalaja said.

After the attack hundreds of shamans blocked anyone trying to enter the site, which they said was in the pathway of a spirit-god that controls Lake Victoria. Surrounding the site, they made it difficult for police to get to the church, sources said. A team of top police officials from Masaka and Kalangala eventually broke through and ended the assault.

### Muslim Fulani gunmen kill 15 Nigerian Christians

KADUNA STATE, Nigeria — Muslim Fulani gunmen killed 15 Christians on Jan. 2 in an area of Kaduna state where 10 others were killed Dec. 27, 2014, ending a week of violence in Nigeria in which at least 28 died.

The ethnic Fulani herdsmen killed the 15 Christians in Ambe-Madaki village in Kaduna's Sanga Local Government Area in an attack that began at about 4 a.m., sources said. On Dec. 27 in Tattaura village of the same area Muslim Fulanis killed 10 Christians.

In the early January assault the Muslim Fulani gunmen shot villagers and set fire to their houses, local resident Yohanna Adamu said.

On New Year's Eve in Plateau state Muslim Fulani gunmen attacked the Christian community of Kantoma Mangu Local Government Area killing three members of the Church of Christ in Nations, residents said. One of the three was beheaded.

### New Testaments, other books burned in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Turkish authorities are searching for a suspected arsonist in connection with a fire that destroyed thousands of New Testaments and other Christian books. The fire started Dec. 7, 2014, at approximately 7 p.m. at the offices of the Bible Correspondence Course in Turkey (BCC-Turkey), located in a multistory building that also houses a church in the Kadikoy neighborhood of Istanbul, according to officials of the ministry.

No one was injured in the fire and no structural damage was reported, but according to an initial estimate by BCC-Turkey, some 10,000 religious books were destroyed, many of them New Testaments. Total losses at press time were estimated at approximately \$12,500.

Students who live in an apartment on the top floor of the building reported smoke to emergency dispatchers, who sent firefighters to the scene. ☞